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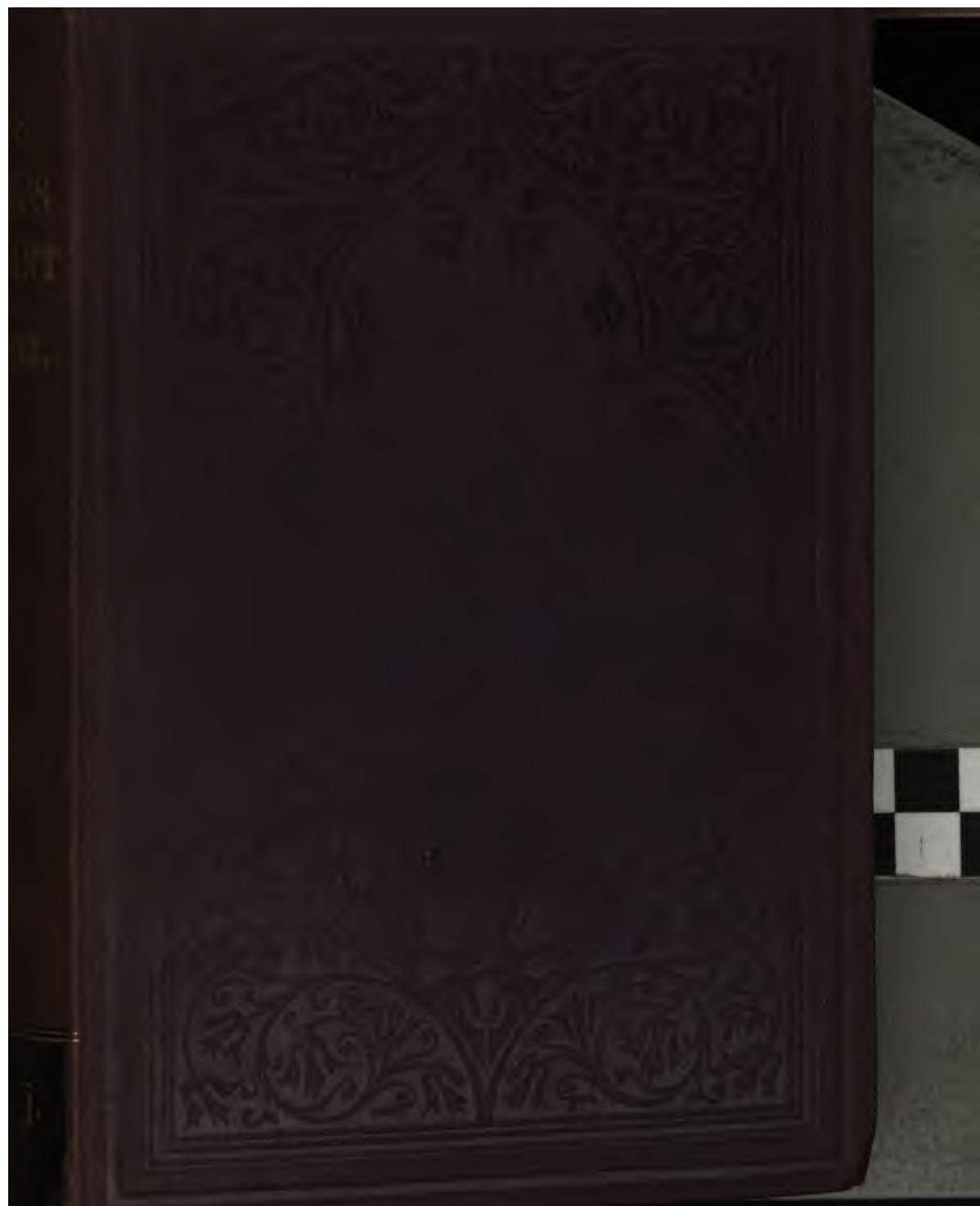
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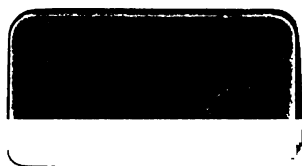
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THE
CLASS LEADER'S ASSISTANT.

CONTAINING
UPWARDS OF 470 VIEWS OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE,
DUTY, EXPERIENCE, AND PRACTICE.

BY
JOHN BATE,
AUTHOR OF 'CYCLOPEDIA OF ILLUSTRATIONS OF MORAL AND RELIGIOUS TRUTHS,'
'CHRISTIAN'S SELF-EXAMINER,' ETC. ETC.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following work has been prepared to supply a place which the author considered of too essential importance in the welfare of Methodism to remain any longer vacant.

Due prominence has been given to certain views of Christ and His religion, with an aim to meet the wants of the age in its tendency to formalism, lukewarmness, and worldliness ; while the chief phases of Christian experience, as brought out in Methodist Class Meetings, have been constantly kept in view.

There has been more attention paid to the *thought* and *spirit* than the *style* ; to write *suggestively*, rather than *elaborately*.

In the choice of hymns for the end of each chapter, Wesley has been purposely avoided, except in one or two cases ; not because anything better could be found, but because it was thought that Wesley's hymns were in the hands of every Leader, and something new to them may add more interest to the book, and, meanwhile, furnish additional sacred poetry to what they already have.

The arrangement of the book into chapters and meetings is more for variety and form than as a necessary part of its order. As there are on an average forty class meetings held in a year (deducting for monthly prayer meetings), the work has been divided into forty chapters or meetings, with from ten to twelve pieces in each chapter or meeting, as that may be taken as the average number of members

in each class. It is not, however, thought that this arrangement will provide, in each meeting in the book, such material as may be needed in each meeting as held by the Leader; but that the reading over one or two chapters, as time permits, may assist the Leader in responding to those expressions of experience which may come before him from the members of his class. Hence it is far from the intention of the author that any of the following pieces should be read to members, or should be committed to memory and repeated. They are simply meant to *assist* the Leader in the best way which he may choose to adopt.

The propriety of providing a work with special reference to the assistance of Class Leaders, has been called in question by some persons. No sound and forcible reason, however, has been adduced in support of the objection.

The reasons why help *should be* provided for Class Leaders are sufficiently strong to justify the present attempt. *First.* The importance of their work in its relation to the spiritual, numerical, and financial prosperity of the Church, justifies it. *Secondly.* The frequency of their work — once every week — with the same people. *Thirdly.* The diversified and difficult cases of conscience which come under their notice for advice. *Fourthly.* The want of time which the great majority have to read a variety of books, with a view to provide themselves with such material as they need.

Why should it be thought desirable to prepare *specific* assistance for ministers and teachers, the majority of whom have had a previous *training* for their work, and Leaders be altogether left to themselves? How is this to be viewed? Must it be thought that Leaders are sufficiently qualified in themselves, rendering all help a work of

PREFACE.

supererogation? or that their office in the Church is not of sufficient importance to require help? or that they are incapable of appreciating any assistance which may be offered them?

While it is thought that the pulpit and school must keep up with the progress of mind in its religious, moral, and intellectual developments, is the Class Room to remain fifty or sixty years behind? Shall everything be done to make *them* efficient and successful in their position in the Church, and *this* be left to work on as best it can? If it is a part of the Church organization, and meant to subserve the interests of the Church, then why should it not receive its due share of attention to help it to sustain its proper place and do its proper work? Writing about its failures, or its necessities; its claims, or its scripturalness, will not accomplish the end. Let *something actually be done*.

But it may be said that the work of the Class Leader is purely *spiritual*. Granted. Must there not, then, be preparation? Does this dispense with the propriety of assistance? If "purely spiritual," the more important, responsible, and solemn; and *therefore* the more need for assistance in making the preparation which the work in its vast nature demands. Is not the work of the minister in the pulpit *spiritual*? Is not the work of the Sabbath-school teacher *spiritual*? Do they, therefore, depend *exclusively* upon the resources of their own experience in the discharge of their duties? Whatever the experience, there must be something else associated with it to render ministers and teachers successful in their work.

It is well understood that in the class room *experience in religion* is the chief subject to be dealt with, and that experience in the Leader is *one* of the chief qualifications.

But, at the same time, may not assistance be appropriate in finding out his experience in the just perception of it, and the intelligent utterance of it? Does he not also need knowledge of doctrine, duty, promise, precept, to an extent which shall enable him to teach and exhort in a way to promote the best spiritual interests of his members? May not he, then, *as* a Leader, receive assistance in these, as well as the minister and teacher? Does it follow that appropriate assistance rendered to the Leader would raise him above his office, any more than it raises them? In one word, may not the arguments in support of direct help being provided for ministers and teachers, in their spheres, apply to the Leader in *his*?

But it may be well to inquire into the work which devolves upon Leaders in their classes, in order to ascertain still further the necessity and propriety of providing assistance for them. This cannot be better done than to quote an excellent fragment from the late Mr. C. Perronet, which is recommended by the Rev. Mr. Wesley:—"It is the duty of Leaders, 1. To inquire whether they (their members) *now* believe—now enjoy the life of God; whether they grow herein or decay; if they decay, what is the cause, and what the cure. 2. Whether they aim at being fully devoted to God, or would keep something back; whether they see God's hand in all that befalls them; and how they bear what He lays upon them. 3. Whether they take up their cross daily; resist the bent of nature; oppose self-love in all its hidden forms, and discover it through all its disguises. 4. Whether they humble themselves in everything; are willing to be blamed and despised for well-doing; account it the greatest honour that Christ appoints them to walk with Himself in paths that are peculiarly *His own*; whether they are willing to drink of

His cup, and to be baptized with *His baptism*. 5. Whether they can cordially love those that despitefully use them; justify the ways of God in thus dealing with them; and in all they suffer, seek the destruction of inward idolatry and impatience; how they conquer self-will 'in all its spiritual forms; see through all its disguises, seeking itself when it pretends to seek nothing but the glory of God. 6. Whether they are simple, open, free, and without reserve in speaking, and see it their duty and privilege so to be. 7. To inquire concerning prayer; the answers to prayer; faith in Christ; distrust of themselves; consciousness of their own vileness and nothingness. 8. How they improve their talents; what zeal they have for doing good in all they do, or suffer, or receive from God; whether they live *above* it (above trusting in their zeal for doing good), making Christ their all, and offering up to God nothing for acceptance but His life and death. 9. Whether they have a clear, full, abiding conviction, that without inward, complete, universal holiness, no man shall see the Lord; that Christ was sacrificed for us, that we might be a whole burnt sacrifice to God; and that having received the Lord Jesus Christ will profit us nothing unless we steadily and uniformly walk in Him."

Such is the work of a Class Leader as laid down in the days of Wesley. Taking such to be the work of the Leader *now*, does he not require assistance?

The above extract was not seen by the author until his book was completed within a few pages. How far it will render the Leader assistance in his work, as therein specified, shall be left to him to judge.

To show further the necessity of assistance being provided for Class Leaders in the discharge of their important duties, another extract shall be given in the words of a

living writer, Rev. J. H. Rigg, which were met with at the same time as the above.

“A Class Leader must be thoroughly in earnest, must be lively in prayer, ready in speech, affectionate in manner. Time was when these qualifications were of themselves almost sufficient. In the infancy of Methodism, few joined the Society who were not zealous at least. The novelty of Methodism, the monopoly which it possessed of spiritual fervour and activity, the stimulant of persecution, the sense of the as yet undeveloped energies of the system, and the anticipation of a glorious future which lay before it, kept alive the zeal and enthusiasm of the members. They all brought life, vigour, excitability, into the Class Meeting. The Leader had sometimes little to do except to regulate their expressions of feeling and displays of energy. If he himself were but lively and ready, it was enough. The class kept itself up. It could not but be attractive and popular.

“But now-a-days something more is needed in a Class Leader than liveliness. The novelty of Methodism has passed away; its reproach has greatly abated, and what persecution remains is too petty, and withal too partial, to fan the flame of zeal or enthusiasm. Methodism, moreover, no longer stands absolutely *alone* as the evangelical institute and propaganda of England, and almost of the world. The members breathe a less bracing and stimulating atmosphere; a danger of languor has come with “these piping times of peace;” many profess an hereditary Methodism; they have been gently led in early youth to join the Class Meeting. It is clear that, under such circumstances, much more depends on the Leader than did a hundred years ago. The members need to be quickened, to be instructed, to be led on; zeal, wisdom, experience,

the gift equally of pungent and of persuasive speech, a moving earnestness and depth of character, must concur to the equipment of a thoroughly competent Class Leader. Such men may not be very numerous; yet we cannot doubt that they might be found in sufficient numbers to meet the demands of our Society, if the great object of seeking out and training such Leaders were studied with the zeal which its importance demands. The times are peaceful—persecution has ceased to be formidable; there are many hereditary Methodists who, not having learnt much in a little time in the school of sharp and deep experience, have the greater need to be schooled by a wise and thoughtful Christian mentor; there is also an amount of intellectual activity, as respects the frame of Christian doctrine and the meaning of Christian experience, and especially the mutual relations of doctrinal and experimental truth, which must be met by a corresponding intelligence, clearness, and comprehensiveness in the statement of Christian doctrine and the description of Christian experience. For these and the like reasons Methodist Class Leaders to-day must be men of thoughtfulness as well as fervour; men of individual quality and force as well as men of Christian sympathy and principle.”

Let it not be thought egotism if stated that the following work is considered calculated to assist Leaders in the particulars to which Mr. Rigg refers.

The author would desire to feel thankful to those ministers who kindly responded to his circular, and who wrote approvingly and encouragingly of his intention; also to those Leaders who gave in their names as subscribers to the work before it was published.

As in the beginning and throughout, the author has sought the Divine blessing, so in the end he would ask

that the Holy Spirit might render the book extensively useful;—that He would in Pentecostal energy dwell in the thousands of Methodist Leaders, and make them mighty in their work, and instruments in elevating the character of Class Meetings, and increasing their spiritual benefits, so that they may, on a larger scale than ever, continue to be “wells of salvation” in the valley of Baca for Zion’s pilgrims;—“banqueting houses” for Christian travellers to the “better country;”—armouries for soldiers of the Cross, to buckle on their armour anew for coming conflicts;—rallying places and times for the hosts of the Lord, to obtain a knowledge of the Captain’s orders, and acquire general qualifications for the Gospel warfare;—the gathering of disciples in the upper room, waiting for the coming of the Holy Ghost, whence they shall disperse, each one in his sphere and ability, to witness for Jesus;—means of promoting affection and confidence among the members, and between them and the ministry.

That Class Meetings may be all this and a hundredfold more; that Leaders may, through the indwelling of the Spirit, be main instruments in accomplishing this; and that ‘The Class Leader’s Assistant’ may, under God, contribute its share to the same blessed object, is the sincere prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

April, 1865.

P.S.—Should this volume be sufficiently encouraged, it may be followed by others, with a similar aim, at some future time.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
PREFACE	iii	Attention to all Duty	28
CONTENTS	xi	Our Weak Part	29
		Mutual Prayer	30
		(Poetry.)	
CHAPTER I.		Longing for Heaven	31
Standing Still in Religion	1		
Following Holiness	2	CHAPTER IV.	
Attention to Duty	3	The Manifestation of the Spirit	33
Nearer Heaven	4	Living without Sin	34
God our Only Help	4	Trusting in God for Christian	
Cheerful in Religion	5	Progress	35
Seeking Forgiveness of Sin	6	Evil Thoughts	35
A Hope of Living Nearer to God	7	Pressure of Worldly Things	36
Knowledge of Christ	8	Discouragements	37
Darkness	8	Desiring to Know the Will of	
Various Capacities of Usefulness	9	God	37
(Poetry.)		Seeing by Faith	38
All Well	10	Forgetting the Past	39
		Seeking Assurance	40
CHAPTER II.		(Poetry.)	
Leaning on the Arm of the		The Paternal Goodness of God	41
Beloved	11		
Doing Evil that Good may Come	12	CHAPTER V.	
An Israelite Indeed	13	The Power of the Holy Spirit	42
The Christian Armour	14	Desiring to be Useful	43
The Christian Reward	15	Activity of Real Religion	44
Privileges of the Christian	15	Peace of Christ	45
The Lord Forsaking us	16	Benefit of Affliction	45
Contentment	18	Consecration to God	46
Tendency of Afflictions	19	Satan as an Enemy	47
Decision	19	Weaknesses	48
Peace of Mind	20	Comforts of Religion	49
(Poetry.)		Cleaving unto the Lord	50
Comfort in Prayer	21	(Poetry.)	
		Trust in God	51
CHAPTER III.			
Being Filled with the Spirit	22	CHAPTER VI.	
Watching unto Prayer	23	The Fruit of the Spirit	53
Rejoicing in Christ	24	Looking unto Jesus	54
Offences in the Church	25	Slavish Fear	55
Loss of the Means	26	Glorify God in your Lot	56
Lukewarmness	27	Grace and Glory	56
Mourning over Troubles	27		

	PAGE
Blaming the Devil . . .	56
Believing and Feeling . . .	57
Self-Examination . . .	58
Communion with God . . .	59
Temptation to the Last . . .	60

(Poetry.)

Panting after Jesus . . .	61
---------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

Looking Back . . .	62
Suffering and Glory . . .	63
Conformity to Christ . . .	64
All Glory to Christ . . .	65
Jehovah-Jireh . . .	65
Promises of the Spirit . . .	66
Self-Denial . . .	67
Expecting Trials . . .	68
Patience . . .	69
Acknowledging God in all Things . . .	70
Living near to God . . .	71

(Poetry.)

Aspiration after Christ . . .	72
-------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VIII.

A Fitful Religion . . .	72
Praying without Answers . . .	73
Believers the Brethren of Christ . . .	74
Fighting with Satan . . .	75
A Mark of Perfection in Love . . .	75
Not Satisfied with Present Attainments . . .	76
Bearing Fruit . . .	77
Visiting the Sick . . .	78
Fears in Old Age . . .	78
Overtaken in a Fault . . .	79
The Presence of the Spirit in the Church . . .	80

(Poetry.)

Gently, Lord! . . .	81
---------------------	----

CHAPTER IX.

The Presence of God . . .	82
Trusting God for Small Things . . .	83
All for the Best . . .	84
Faith Asleep and Awake . . .	85
The Believer a Servant of Christ . . .	86
The Glory of Holiness . . .	86
Through Jesus Christ . . .	87
Closet Devotion . . .	88
The Indulgence of One Sin . . .	89
The Eye of the World . . .	90
Bearing the Cross . . .	90

(Poetry.)

The Traveller to Zion . . .	91
-----------------------------	----

CHAPTER X.

	PAGE
Imperfect Knowledge . . .	93
Observing the Faults of Others . . .	94
The Cares of this Life . . .	95
Prayer in all Things . . .	95
Mortification of Sin . . .	96
Conflict of the Flesh . . .	96
Growth in Holiness . . .	97
Glorifying God in Affliction . . .	98
Greater Things . . .	98
Loving God . . .	99
Formality in Religion . . .	100

(Poetry.)

The Guidance of the Holy Spirit . . .	101
---------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI.

Walking in Religion . . .	102
Weakness of Sin . . .	103
All Things Work together for Good . . .	104
Dead unto Sin . . .	105
A Soft Answer . . .	105
Intercessory Prayer . . .	105
Reasons for Afflictions . . .	106
The Joy of the Lord our Strength . . .	107
Doubts and Fears . . .	109
Evidence of Love to Christ . . .	109

(Poetry.)

Heavenly Communion . . .	110
--------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII.

Witnessing for Jesus . . .	111
Shelter in Calamity . . .	112
Bodily Sanctity . . .	113
Work for Repentance . . .	114
A Desire to be Saved . . .	114
A Christian . . .	116
Depending upon Feelings . . .	116
Access to God through Christ . . .	117
Personal Searching of the Scriptures . . .	118
Dependence upon God . . .	118
Starting for Heaven . . .	119

(Poetry.)

The Goodness of God . . .	120
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

Instability in Religion . . .	121
Desiring more Zeal for Christ . . .	122
Acknowledging God in Special Mercies . . .	123
Do not Despair . . .	124
The Temporal Sacrificed for the Spiritual . . .	125

	PAGE
God Fighteth for the Christian . . .	125
Difference in Christian Experi- ence . . .	126
Foretastes of Heaven. . .	127
Walking with God . . .	128
Christ our Judge . . .	128
Expecting Answers to Prayer . . .	129
(Poetry.)	
Divine Sympathy . . .	130
CHAPTER XIV.	
Willingness of God to Save . . .	131
Opposition of the World . . .	132
Seeking Holiness . . .	133
Security of Christians . . .	133
The Source of Spiritual Strength . . .	134
Faith of the New Convert . . .	135
Doing in Religion . . .	136
An Advocate with the Father . . .	137
Prayer an Evidence of Love . . .	138
Heavenly Mindedness . . .	138
(Poetry.)	
Christ's Invitation . . .	140
CHAPTER XV.	
Doubts . . .	141
A Way of Sanctification . . .	142
Sinning and Repenting . . .	142
Omissions in Prayer . . .	143
Submission . . .	144
Disposition to Murmur . . .	144
Nearness of God. . .	146
Bereavement . . .	146
The Holy Spirit in Prayer . . .	147
Mutual Forgiveness . . .	148
(Poetry.)	
Morning Devotion . . .	150
CHAPTER XVI.	
Glorifying God . . .	151
Proportionate Strength . . .	152
A Will to Work . . .	153
The Tongue . . .	153
Going on unto Perfection . . .	154
The Portion of Saints . . .	155
Complaining . . .	156
Against Fear of Evil . . .	157
Nearer Heaven . . .	157
The Christian a Soldier of Christ . . .	158
The Promise of Salvation . . .	159
(Poetry.)	
Consecration to God . . .	160

CHAPTER XVII.		PAGE
Prayer and Action . . .		161
Showing Love to Jesus . . .		162
Standing Still in Religion . . .		163
Benefits of Prayer . . .		164
Mutual Love . . .		165
Difference in the Ways of Con- version . . .		165
Earnestness in Religion . . .		166
Conformity to the Holy Spirit . . .		167
Believers, Members of Christ . . .		168
Trial of Faith . . .		168
Self-Righteousness . . .		169
(Poetry.)		
Thy Way—not Mine . . .		170
CHAPTER XVIII.		
Christian Hope . . .		171
Forebodings and their Antidotes . . .		172
Seek Holiness . . .		173
Life out of Death . . .		173
Union with Christ . . .		174
Needless Fear . . .		174
Troubles . . .		175
The Face Zionwards . . .		176
Presence of Satan . . .		177
Influence of Good Example . . .		178
He Careth for us . . .		178
Nearness of Sin . . .		179
(Poetry.)		
My Father . . .		180
CHAPTER XIX.		
Use of Infirmities . . .		181
Indwelling of the Holy Spirit . . .		182
Ignorance of the Way . . .		183
Resolution against Sin . . .		184
Communion of Saints . . .		184
Progress of Religion . . .		185
Happiness of Walking with God . . .		186
Inconsistency in Professors . . .		187
Sojourners . . .		187
Divine Guidance . . .		188
Earthly and Heavenly Things . . .		189
(Poetry.)		
Necessity of Assurance . . .		190
CHAPTER XX.		
Difficulties of the Way . . .		191
The Chastening Rod . . .		192
Fallen into Sin . . .		193
The Manner of the Witness of the Spirit . . .		194

	PAGE
Purification of Trials . . .	195
He Giveth more Grace . . .	195
Personal Service . . .	196
Humility . . .	197
Resting on Christ . . .	199
The Holy Spirit, the Comforter . . .	199
Depression . . .	200

(Poetry.)

Abiding in Christ . . .	201
-------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

Pleading the Promises in Prayer . . .	202
More than Conquerors . . .	203
Sanctification . . .	204
Good Works . . .	204
An Increase of Faith . . .	205
The Way to Heaven . . .	206
The Holiest have Need of Christ . . .	207
Voluntary Thoughts . . .	208
The Goodness of God in Trials . . .	208
Mistakes with Christian Perfection . . .	209
The Sympathy of Jesus . . .	210

(Poetry.)

Anything but this . . .	211
-------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXII.

Christian Rejoicing . . .	212
Ungodly Company . . .	213
The Heart for God . . .	214
Meekness in the Christian . . .	215
Tribulation . . .	216
Christian Dissatisfaction . . .	217
Seeking Happiness . . .	218
Redemption in the Blood of Jesus . . .	218
Temptation after a Blessing . . .	219
The Time of Conversion . . .	220
Keeping in the Fold . . .	221

(Poetry.)

Confidence in Jesus . . .	222
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXIII.

Weak Faith . . .	223
Christian Love . . .	224
Danger and Security . . .	225
The Help of the Lord . . .	226
The Trembling Christian . . .	226
The Direct Witness of the Spirit . . .	227
The Good of Adversity . . .	228
Desiring the Grace of Christ . . .	229
Desiring Heaven . . .	229
Spiritual Dearth . . .	230

(Poetry.)

The Gourd . . .	231
-----------------	-----

CHAPTER XXIV.

	PAGE
Influence of Faith upon us . . .	232
The Divine Presence in the Means . . .	233
Christian Love and Unity . . .	234
Jesus Lives. . . .	235
Do Something . . .	236
The Returning Backslider . . .	236
A Sense of Unworthiness . . .	237
Obedience to Christ . . .	238
Receiving Pardon . . .	238
Resignation to God . . .	239
Hope Beyond this Life . . .	240

(Poetry.)

"Is it Well?" . . .	241
---------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXV.

Nearness of Satan . . .	242
Seeking Salvation . . .	243
Possession of Christ . . .	244
Doing Good to our Enemies . . .	245
Dare to be Singular . . .	246
The Witness in Ourselves . . .	246
Fearful State of the Backslider . . .	247
Steadfastness . . .	248
Speaking Evil of the Absent . . .	249
Difference in Temptation . . .	249
Business and Religion . . .	250

(Poetry.)

Calmness . . .	251
----------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVI.

Seeing God in all Things . . .	253
Reliefs in the Sorrows of Life . . .	254
Christ in Religion . . .	255
Comfort of Assurance . . .	256
Faith and Salvation . . .	257
The Favour of God . . .	257
Summary of Christian Perfection . . .	258
Chastening in Love . . .	259
No Fruit to Perfection . . .	260
Persecutions . . .	260

(Poetry.)

Satisfaction in Jesus . . .	261
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVII.

A Little Love to God . . .	263
The Effects of a True Faith . . .	264
In Conflict . . .	265
Life in Christ . . .	265
Nature of Subjection to God . . .	266
Aiming at Perfection . . .	266
Fear of Falling . . .	267
A Small Temptation . . .	268

CONTENTS.

XV

	PAGE
Providence	269
Resignation in Sickness	270
The Presence of God	270
(Poetry.)	
What then?	271

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Confessing Christ before the World	272
Encouragement to the Dejected Christian	273
Not Now as at First	274
Faithfulness of God	275
The God of Comfort	276
Prayers not Lost	277
Holiness Seeks Holiness	278
More Mercies than Afflictions	278
The Christian Hope	279
Use of the Means of Grace	280

(Poetry.)

The Love of Christ	281
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXIX.

Foreseeing Trials	282
Constraining Influence of Christ's Love	283
Defective Family Religion	284
The Holy Spirit as Fire	285
Loss of the Will	286
Spiritual Strength	287
Confidence in Christ	287
Promises conditional	288
I am what I am	289
Perseverance	290

(Poetry.)

Joy in Sorrow	290
-------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXX.

Living Epistles	291
Church Fellowship	292
God's Watchful Care	293
Christ is yours	294
The Christian Temper	295
Christ an Example of doing Good	295
Signs of a Decaying Christian	296
Love to God's People	298
Renouncing all Sin	299

(Poetry.)

Answering Prayer	300
----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXI.

Expecting the Holy Spirit	301
No Comfort in Looking to ourselves	302

	PAGE
Self-Condernnation	303
Complete Obedience	303
Zeal and Activity	304
Straitened Desires	305
Desiring the Highest State of Grace	306
Resting in the Means	307
Glorifying God in Every Act	307
The Glorification of Christ by the Spirit	308

(Poetry.)

The Name of Jesus	309
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Two-Fold Witness	310
Leaving Things with God	311
Earth and Heaven	312
Christ and His Cross	313
Faith and Obedience	313
Christ our Example	314
The Fear of Man	315
The Motions of the Spirit to Good	316
Complaining of Leanness	317

(Poetry.)

Praying in Spirit	319
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Love to the House of God	320
The Uttermost Salvation	321
Eminent Piety	322
Severe Chastisements	323
Purification of Hope	324
Unbelief	325
Faith Giving and Receiving	326
A Present Heaven	326
Contemplation of the Dead	327

(Poetry.)

A Doubting Christian	328
--------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Necessity of an Inward Change	329
The Ability of Christ to Save	330
Seeking God	331
Much in Prayer	332
Happiness in Obedience	332
Affliction no Proof of God's Displeasure	333
How to Find Contentment	334
Holy Conversation	334
Use the Grace you have	335
The Christian Life a Conflict	336

(Poetry.)

Looking unto Jesus	337
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXV.		PAGE		PAGE
Knowledge by Practice	338	Rejoicing in God	367	
Faith in Self and in the Saviour	339	The Mind of Jesus	368	
Indwelling of the Holy Ghost	340	Duties of Masters	369	
Charity	341	Peace of Mind	370	
Happiness in God	342	Happiness in the Divine Presence	370	
The Lord a Refuge	342	At the Feet of Jesus	371	
For Christ's Sake	343	Doubtful Religion	373	
Fidelity in Trial	344	Security in God	374	
Conviction not Condemnation	345	The Lovingkindness of God	374	
Christian Liberty	345	(Poetry.)		
(Poetry.)		Following Jesus	375	
The Pilgrim's Longing	346			
CHAPTER XXXVI.		CHAPTER XXXIX.		
Fear not	348	Conversation in Heaven	376	
A Man of Prayer	349	God our Portion	377	
Temptation	350	The Purchase Price	378	
Living to God	350	Consistency	379	
"None but Christ, none but Christ"	351	Resisting Temptation	380	
Victory over Death	352	The Seeing Soul	380	
The Promises no Ground for Indifference	353	Seeking Jesus	381	
Self-Knowledge	354	Regret for the Past	382	
Small Grace	354	The New Commandment	383	
A Means of Receiving the Spirit	355	The Manner of Prayer	383	
(Poetry.)		(Poetry.)		
Rest in Christ	356	Bearing the Cross	385	
CHAPTER XXXVII.		CHAPTER XL.		
Impulses and Suggestions	357	Religion a Power	386	
The Assurance of Faith	358	A Rule of Judging	387	
Duties of Servants	359	Temptation and Sin	388	
Forgetfulness of Prayer	360	A Mark of Sanctification	389	
Support in Affliction	360	Motions to do Good from Satan	389	
Cumbered about much Serving	361	Christ a Friend	390	
Victory in Jesus	362	Duties of Parents	391	
Crucified with Christ	363	Search the Scriptures	392	
Humility	363	Neither Poverty nor Riches	393	
The Blessing of the Lord	364	Fulfilment of the Promises	394	
(Poetry.)		The Human in Religion	394	
See how these Christians Love!	365	(Poetry.)		
CHAPTER XXXVIII.		Going to Jesus	396	
Leaving the World	366	APPENDIX.		
		The Sword of the Spirit	397	

CLASS LEADER'S ASSISTANT.

CHAPTER I.

(*First Meeting.*)

STANDING STILL IN RELIGION.

How often do we hear the expression, "I know there is not any standing still in religion." The expression is scripturally true; and yet are there not many who use it, in a way which plainly shows their knowledge to have no influence upon them for good? If you are aware of this fact, then let it move you to all diligence in Christian duties. Your conduct in religion should be neither stationary nor retrogressive, but onward. As a man goes on in his journey, so should you in the ways of religion. As a child goes on in its growth of body, so should you in the growth of religion. As a sapling goes on striking its roots deeper in the earth, gaining material in its trunk, and, spreading its branches farther in the air, so should you go on acquiring stability, strength, and fruitfulness in religion.

There cannot be any standing still in religion. Can the earth stand still on its axis? Can time stand still in its channel? Can life stand still in its course? Can God stand still in His Providence? or Christ in His mediation? or the Spirit in His influences? No more can religion stand still in the soul. It is contrary to its inherent elements, to its noble purposes, and to its benevolent arrangements.

There must not be any standing still in religion, even if there could. In proportion as you stood still, you would lose distance in your journey, growth in your life, and glory in your reward. By standing still, you would give the world an opportunity to entice, Satan the privilege of reasoning, and

the flesh an advantage of complaining. You would instantly enter upon a backsliding state, which might end in a fearful apostacy from Christ.

"GO ON UNTO PERFECTION." "SO RUN that ye may obtain." "ALWAYS ABOUND in the work of the Lord."

FOLLOWING HOLINESS.

There is no greater good which you can follow than holiness. If you follow knowledge, it shall vanish away; riches, they shall deceive; honour, it is an empty show; pleasures, they are transient; anything earthly, it shall either forsake you, or you shall forsake it. But holiness is as real, as true, as pure, as satisfying, as eternal, as God Himself; for it is nothing less than conformity to His nature in the soul, and conformity to His will in the life. In following this, you are following that which is the end of Divine revelations to man, the end of the entire work of the Saviour in redemption, the end of the universal operations of the Holy Spirit, the end of the means and ordinances of the Church, and the end of all the dispensations of Providence. You are following that which distinguishes God from Satan, angels from devils, saints from sinners, and heaven from hell; that which will give you eyes to see God, taste to enjoy him, hands to work for Him, feet to run in His ways, heart to love Him, and life to glorify Him; that which will invest you with power for every duty, privilege, trial, and enemy of the Christian life; that which will give peace in trouble, joy in sorrow, resignation in adversity, fortitude in bereavement, courage in conflict, triumph in death, and glory for ever; that which distinguished Enoch from Nimrod, David from Shimei, Samuel from Saul, Elijah from Ahab, Peter from Herod, Paul from Nero, and John from Diotrephes.

This, then, is the *pre-eminent* good of heaven and earth. Follow *hard* after it. Let your eye be upon it, your hand reached out to it, your feet running towards it. Let your

soul thirst for it and pant after it, as the hart for the water-brooks. With a diligence that shall rival or surpass that of the miser in following gold, or the worldling in following the world, or the racer in running for the prize—follow holiness. Make this the “mark” at which you shall aim in all things; and the “one thing” towards which you shall “press.”

“WITHOUT HOLINESS NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD.”

ATTENTION TO DUTY.

There is a possibility of your looking more to reward than to duty, and in doing this you may be influenced by sinister motives, and in the end fail to obtain reward. If you look to reward, do so *through* duty; for it is only through that that reward is bestowed. He who promises and gives the reward, does so upon condition that duty is performed. It is not for us to expect the reward irrespective of duty. This would be presumption. God will not *give* it irrespective of duty. It is evident, then, that our chief aim should be *attention to duty*, leaving the reward and its bestowment with the Great Faithful Master. What is our duty, as taught by God in His Word, in His providence, and in a well-enlightened conscience? This is the important question for us to ponder; and having received an intelligible answer, it is for us, in the fear of God, and with His gracious assistance, firmly, earnestly, and courageously, to attend to it. The duty may sometimes cross our feelings and inclinations; it may even *appear* against our interests; it may seem a burden too irksome to bear; it may expose us to ridicule and reproach; nevertheless, if it is our *duty*, all these things must be laid aside or walked over, so that we may reach duty, and, as faithful Christians, perform it. If this be your aim in life, brother, reward is yours as certainly as duty. You have it already in a good conscience, in an approving God, in a living hope; and in the prospect of greater reward in heaven. How noble do the army of prophets, apostles, and martyrs appear in their attention to duty, in the

face of sword, imprisonment, fire, and death! And now, *after* duty, what a lofty place they occupy in the glory of the Church on earth, and among the ranks of the shining ones before the throne in heaven!

NEARER HEAVEN.

The simple fact of our time getting shorter every day does not imply that we are getting also nearer heaven. As time is flying, it may carry us on its wings nearer hell than heaven. The true and only reliable rule by which to judge upon this point is, whether we are getting nearer *holiness*. If we are growing in conformity to the Divine likeness and nature; if we are dying daily to sin and living unto God; if we are realising more and more of the love of Christ within us; if we are rising higher in spirituality of affection and thought; if we are delighting ourselves more heartily in the service of God, then are we, indeed, getting nearer heaven. Heaven is perfection in holiness, according to the will of God, and as we approach this we approach heaven.

Let us distinctly and vividly understand this. There is a danger lest we think too much of heaven as a place of beauty, of pleasure, of glory, of great society, without thinking of it as a place of *spotless purity*; and all those features of heaven as arising out of this. Let us, then, press on towards purity, through the blood of the Lamb; and in the proportion we do this we shall get nearer heaven.

GOD OUR ONLY HELP.

If you are convinced that God is your only help, then be sure that you trust exclusively in Him. Do not rest in yourself, or in others, or in any of the means, as though they were your help in themselves. You may use them as channels through which to receive help from God; but He is the alone Source of every blessing. Feel your absolute dependence upon Him for all succour in temptation, deliverance from trouble, comfort in affliction, strength in weakness. Lean upon Him

by faith and prayer. Hide yourself under the shadow of His wings. Take Him for your Shield and Buckler. Draw from Him every day through prayer the strength you need for every day's trials; never fear of exhausting His resources. Though your weakness may be very great, His help is more than adequate; He is an ever present help, an ever adapted help, an all-sufficient help, and a faithful help. With His help there is no duty but you can perform; no privilege but you can enjoy; and no enemy but you can vanquish. **THIS HELP MAY BE FOUND AT THE THRONE OF GRACE.**

CHEERFUL IN RELIGION.

Religion is the last thing in the world in which and with which you should be gloomy. Surely you, who have such an interest in God, in Christ, in the Spirit, in heaven; to whom belong the promises, pardon, peace, hope, power over sin, victory over the world, association with the saints, and communion with angels, are the last that should hang your harp upon the willows, and fail to sing the songs of Zion. Keep in the way of religion, and it is impossible but you should realise that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It is when we go into the side walks of the world, or the thorny ways of our own tempers, or the rugged roads of our own contrivance, that we find our experience and the words of Scripture to disagree.

Be careful lest you prejudice others by the melancholy representation you give of religion. The sinner wants joy, and hence resorts to certain means for its attainment; and if he see from you that religion cannot give him as good or better joy than what he finds in sin, he is not likely to embrace it. "Religion," as an old writer says, "is not to extirpate, but regulate your joy; not to destroy it, but to purge it. It is not a weeding-hook to pluck up and root out your joy, but a pruning-hook to moderate and rectify it. For a Christian to hang down the head, and pull in the lip—to have tears in his

eyes, and sorrow upon his heart—not to have a cheerful look, nor a comfortable word—this disparageth religion; and therefore do not abridge yourselves of the lawful joy which God allows you in this world.”

Let your rejoicing be *in* religion,—a good conscience, the favour of God, and interest in heaven, and all things which are yours in the covenant of grace. In this let your rejoicing be holier, deeper, more lasting, more satisfying, than that of the sinner, which is a rejoicing in sin, in earthly things,—a rejoicing which is followed by weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever.

SEEKING FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

You have long been weeping and praying for forgiveness. You have heard the Word, read the Scriptures, wrestled with God in your closet, denied yourself of food and sleep, kept yourself aloof from society, excepting the people of God; but still you do not find that which is the object of your earnest desire. You think sometimes, perhaps, that the Saviour is not so kind as represented, or that God is hard in His feelings, or that the plan of salvation is more difficult than ministers make it appear, or that you have not sufficiently repented, or prayed. Now, while it is proper for you to pray, to mourn, to repent, &c., it may be well for you to ask, “How far am I resting in these things instead of resting in Christ?” It is no wonder that you are kept without the blessing, while you are in any degree trusting in the means instead of the end. You have, doubtless, read the “Pilgrim’s Progress.” You remember Pilgrim, when he left the City of Destruction, heavily burdened with his guilt, how he tried a variety of ways to find relief, but all failed. Not until he came to the Cross, and looked upon Him hanging thereon, did his burden roll off. *Then* was he glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, as Bunyan tells us, “He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death.” He stood still awhile in wonder. He was surprised that the sight of the Cross should take away his load.

He looked for his load, but he could not find it. Tears of joy filled his eyes, and the shining one came and said to him, "Peace be with thee; thy sins be forgiven." "Then," says Bunyan, "Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing."

So shall it be with you, my brother, as soon as you get a believing view of the Cross and Him that died on it. Not in the law; not in prayers; not in tears; not in reformation; not in self-denials; not in church communion; but in CHRIST CRUCIFIED is forgiveness of sin. Let the means *help* you to Calvary. When there, "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "By HIM all that believe are justified." O look and live!

A HOPE OF LIVING NEARER TO GOD.

If you have a hope of living nearer to God in the future than you have in the past, let that hope be of such a nature as shall stimulate you to a diligent use of the means to realise the end. If this is not the effect of the hope, it may justly be feared that it is superficial and vain. By contending earnestly for the higher life nearer to God, you will evince the depth and power of your hope. It is in this sense, doubtless, that St. Paul says, "We are saved by hope." As though he had said, "We hope hereafter in life to overcome our besetting sins; we hope to keep under and to subdue the flesh; we hope to escape the snares of Satan; we hope to live above the corrupting power of the world; we hope to die a triumphant death, and to have a blessed welcome into heaven; and this very hope incites us to the use of all the Divinely appointed means to accomplish the salvation for which we hope. Thus, we are saved *instrumentally* by hope." Hold fast your hope. Cherish it. Give to it all the action and power it demands. Be influenced by it in all things; so that they may combine to help you on nearer and nearer to God, until you behold His face in righteousness, and awake up in His image.

KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

As Christ is the most excellent of beings, so the knowledge of Him is the most excellent. St. Paul thought this when he placed it before every other knowledge of which he was possessed, and which existed in the universe of mind. He counted all things but dross for "the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." This is knowledge that gives true light to the intellect and sanctifying grace to the heart; that elevates the soul, and gives to it gifts and graces which make it like the king's daughter, all glorious within. Covet this knowledge. Grow in this knowledge. As you increase in the knowledge of Christ you will increase in admiration of Him, in love to Him, in zeal for His glory, in faithfulness to His cause, in fidelity to His truth, in obedience to His laws, and in conformity to His image. This is knowledge which will never vanish away, but be as lasting as the soul and Christ. Read, hear, pray, that you may grow in this holy and Divine knowledge!

DARKNESS.

You must not think, because you are passing through a little darkness, therefore you are not a child of God. This would be a conclusion contrary to the teachings of Scripture, to the experience of Christ's people, and injurious to your best interests. You may still be a traveller to Zion although you have to walk in the night season as well as in the sunshine. Though a black cloud may for a time intervene between the light of your Father's countenance and your soul, yet the countenance may shine all the same, and by-and-by the cloud will disperse and you shall rejoice in the brightness of His appearing. You may for a time be as a tree in winter whose sap is gone into the earth and has no fruit or leaves; but, like the tree when the spring and summer weather comes, you shall revive and flourish and bear much fruit. Even Jesus for a time was subject to the withdrawing of the light of His Father's

favour, but there was no dissolution of the union between them. They were still Father and Son—one in nature, love, and work. What wonder if you should be like your Lord in having your time of darkness; but be sure, like Him, the union is maintained between you and God. David had his dark seasons; but still he hoped in God, and counted himself the Lord's. Dr. Payson, of America, with all his devotedness, had many hours of darkness in which he lived; but he never gave up his love to God. John Smith, David Stoner, and others equally eminent for holiness, walked through darkness in their way to heaven; still, however, they maintained their confidence in God, who, according to His word, manifested Himself unto them in lovelier beauties. You may see, then, that your experience is only in agreement with that of the Word of God and the experience of His people. As you are like them in your darkness, seek to be like them in your trust and hope. Go on your way, living and walking by faith. If you have even the valley of the shadow of death to pass through, say unto God, "Thy rod and Thy staff shall comfort me." Listen to the advice of the prophet—"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? LET HIM TRUST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND STAY UPON HIS GOD" (Isaiah 1, 10).

VARIOUS CAPACITIES OF USEFULNESS.

While you are desirous of being useful, be content to be useful with those powers which God has given you, and in that sphere in which He has placed you. There is a kind of Christian who is always thinking—"O, how useful I should be if I was in the office and possessed the talents of that brother or that sister." If you have fallen into this error, be assured that it is a dangerous one, and will lead you astray. God expects from you in the way of usefulness no more than He has bestowed you abilities to perform. Endeavour to ascertain the talent He has given, and then be satisfied to employ *that*; and so

improve it in its own proportion. The capacities of usefulness in Christians are much the same as they are in nature and art. You see the eagle with eyes and wings, which carry it far away in the heavens, while the poor bat can only fly in the region of houses and trees. The nightingale and lark fill the air with their enchanting music, while the homely sparrow can only chirrup on the housetop. But each fills its place, and is useful in so doing. There are the face and fingers to a clock most conspicuous, while the interior is hid from view;—the little cog small and few in its revolutions, while the mainspring sways great power; but all are necessary and occupy an important relation to each other, and are essential to make the clock useful. So it is in the Church; there are variety of offices, and variety of talent to fill them. In this we see Divine wisdom. If, upon examination, you find that you have not the eagle talent, or the nightingale talent, or the mainspring talent, or any other of prominence and great power, do not rest in dormancy, content to be a cipher. Fill the place God has put you in. Occupy *your* talent until He come. Help on the ark of the Lord with your *hand*, if you cannot use your shoulder. Hew the wood and draw the water, if such is your appointed work, according to your capacity. It matters not what place you fill by Divine appointment; if you fill it with fidelity, you shall have the "Well done" from your Lord, as though you had stood first in the order of gifts.

ALL WELL.

Through the love of God our Saviour
 All will be well;
 Free and changeless is His favour,
 All, all is well!
 Precious is the blood that heal'd us,
 Perfect is the grace that seal'd us,
 Strong the hand stretch'd forth to shield us;
 All must be well!

Though we pass through tribulation,

All will be well;

Ours is such a full salvation ;

All, all is well !

Unhappy, still to God confiding,

Fruitful, if in Christ abiding,

Holy, through the Spirit's guiding ;

All must be well !

We expect a bright to-morrow,

All will be well ;

Faith can sing through days of sorrow,—

All, all is well !

On our Father's love relying,

Jesus every need supplying,

Or in living, or in dying,

All must be well!—*Bowly.*

“ We know that all things WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose ” (Rom. viii, 28). “ No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless afterward it YIELDETH THE PEACEABLE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS unto them which are exercised thereby ” (Heb. xii, 11). “ Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he is tried, HE SHALL RECEIVE THE CROWN OF LIFE, which the Lord HATH promised to them that love Him ” (Jas. i, 12). “ It is good for me that I have been afflicted, THAT I MIGHT LEARN THY STATUTES ” (Ps. cxix, 71).

CHAPTER II.

(*Second Meeting.*)

LEANING ON THE ARM OF THE BELOVED.

To come up out of the wilderness leaning upon the arm of the Beloved, that is, Jesus, is the desire and prayer of every

sincere Christian. To lean upon the arm of a beloved implies affection, attachment, dependence, support, guidance, protection, and fellowship. Let Jesus be to you the Beloved—"my Beloved." Believe in Him as such, come to Him as such, set your affection upon Him as such. Let Him be to you the fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. Form an attachment to Him which can be illustrated only by the marriage bond. Depend upon Him for all spiritual things as a child upon its parent for temporal things. Look to Him for support in every trial, duty, and sorrow. Submit to His guidance in every night of darkness and day of trouble, in every place of danger and way of difficulty. When the enemy comes in to assault, look to Him to encompass you with His arm and defend you with His shield. Carry on a constant fellowship with Him in the Spirit. Open your heart before Him, telling Him all your experience. If you shall thus lean upon your Beloved, in the wilderness of life, you shall come up from it in peace, in safety, in purity, in triumph. And when the wilderness, with all its wants, dangers, dreariness, and difficulties, has been travelled, the Paradise of eternity shall open itself to your vision, and your "Beloved" shall give you an abundant entrance into His endless joys. O what a comfort, to have such a Friend in the wilderness, and to have such a Paradise and Friend after the wilderness is past!

DOING EVIL THAT GOOD MAY COME.

It is a snare which Satan and the heart often place before the Christian that the end justifies the means, and therefore under some circumstances he may do evil that good may come. This, however, is expressly contrary to the teaching of Scripture. The Apostle Paul asks, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" His answer is solemn and emphatic—"God forbid." Job inquires of his friends, "Will ye speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for Him?" (Job xiii, 7). God does not require this of any one. His honour, truth, and kingdom can be sustained without resorting to im-

moral means for that purpose. Whatever good object we are required to accomplish, either for ourselves or others, there are a sufficiency of *good* means which may be used for the end. Need a man speak falsehood to obtain the truth? Need a man be mean and servile to reach what he may deem honorable? Need a parent deceive a child to quiet and hush its crying? Need a Christian indulge in the spirit of the world to secure an attendance of worldlings at the house of God? In all these, and similar instances, more would be lost than gained. Besides, there are *good* means which may be used to equal or more advantage. But it often occurs that the end aimed at by the use of questionable means is not realised. The hollowness and inconsistency of such means in the persons who use them are discovered, and frustrate their own designs. Saul, with a view to conquer the Philistines, enacted that none of his soldiers should eat anything until the evening. His end was good, but his means evil. Did he attain his purpose? No. By the very means employed he enfeebled his men, and unprepared them for battle. And so with us, when by any unlawful means we seek to do good. The very adoption and use of such enervate our spiritual powers so that the end upon which we had fixed our minds fails to be realised. "Ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? GOD FORBID" (Rom. vi, 14, 15).

AN ISRAELITE INDEED.

The Saviour pronounced Nathanael "an Israelite indeed." That is, one in reality, who not only carried the name, but the thing itself. He lived as an Israelite ought to live, according to the privileges given unto him in the law of the Lord. Jesus Christ, as the Omniscient One, knew all this of Nathanael. He had been an eye-witness to his sincere and spiritual devotions before God. More than this, Jesus declared that in Nathanael there was "no guile." All he did, as a true Israelite, he did in all honesty, purity, and faith. Jesus, after a thorough in-

spection of him with His eye of flaming fire, searching into the inmost recesses of his nature, pronounced that he was ingenuous, candid, pure. What a character of a man to be given by the Holy One!

Now, *you* wish to be an Israelite indeed; or to change the phrase, to suit our religion, a Christian indeed, in whom there shall be found no guile! You want to be of the true circumcision; not merely to have the name, the sign, the badge, but the spirit, the life, the power of Christianity. You want to live by the Saviour's rules, in your business, in your family, in your closet, in your thoughts, words, and affections, so as to secure the commendation of Christ. You want to do everything from motives, with feelings, and for purposes so pure, that your Divine Master himself, in the inspection of you, shall pronounce you free from all guile. This is the character at which you aim. My brother, you have a noble, a high, a glorious point before you. Is it attainable? It is attainable *before* God, while before men you may fail; for He does not judge as man judgeth. Perhaps no one viewed Nathanael as Jesus did. So you may reach a similar character in *His* judgment, while there may in the partial, imperfect judgment of men be a different opinion. Nevertheless, let it be your aim to be free from guile in *His* sight. Let your judgment rest with Him. Thank God you may reach the *utmost* object of your desires. If the law could make Nathanael so perfect, I am sure you need not doubt whether the blood of Jesus Christ can make *you* equally perfect in the system of the Gospel.

THE CHRISTIAN ARMOUR.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the *whole* armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. vi, 10, 11). *The enemies with whom we fight*: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against

spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. vi, 13—18).

THE CHRISTIAN REWARD.

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."
"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."

PRIVILEGES OF THE CHRISTIAN.

Your privileges as a Christian are very numerous and important. As an encouragement to your faith and hope, and as a way of seeing your distinguished state and character, it will be well for you often to call to mind those privileges as made over unto you in the covenant of grace. You are united to Christ, and Christ is united to you (John xv, 4). You are a

partaker of the Divine nature (2 Pet. i, 4). You have access to God in reconciliation, prayer, &c., by Jesus Christ (Eph. iii, 12). You are a member of the household of God (Eph. ii, 19). You belong to the church of the firstborn (Heb. xii, 23). You have Christ for your Saviour, Intercessor, King, Teacher, Example, Friend, Captain of Salvation, &c. The promises of God are yours in all their preciousness and exceeding greatness (2 Pet. i, 4). All things are yours in Christ (1 Cor. iii, 21, 22). Your name is written in heaven. All things work together for your good. The Spirit is your Witnesser of the pardon of sin and heirship with God; your Sanctifier; your Helper; your Guide; your Comforter. You have God for your Father, King, Glory, Salvation, Redeemer, Keeper, Deliverer, Strength, Refuge, Shield, Tower, Light, Lawgiver, Habitation, Portion. You have angels for your ministering spirits, and all good people for your brethren. In one word, there is nothing beautiful, nothing excellent, nothing holy, nothing that is the Lord's in the Gospel on earth or in the glory of heaven, but what is made over unto you as your privilege. Surely, then, you are highly honoured, and greatly distinguished. You are among the "chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people;" those who are His delight, the apple of His eye, and whose names are engraven on the palm of His hands. My brother, do not be elated with spiritual pride as you think of these honours; rather ask, "What am I or my father's house, that Thou shouldest bestow such mercies upon *me*?" Walk worthy of your high privileges, in all "lowliness and meekness." Enjoy them to the utmost of your ability, as sources of unfailing strength and consolation.

THE LORD FORSAKING US.

You say "You hope the Lord will not forsake you; and you sometimes feel as though He had forsaken you." As to the Lord forsaking you, it is a point upon which you need entertain no fear. When *did* He forsake His people? Where has He

said He will forsake them? Is it a thing which in any way accords with His character and with His relations to His people that He should ever do so? You may as well fear that He will change His names and His nature, as that He will forsake those He loves. "A woman may forget her sucking child," He says, "but I will not forget thee." "Thou art engraven on the palm of my hands," He declares. Is it at all probable that He will forsake His own jewels, His own children, His own saints, those who are His delight and His joy? No. You have His own words for it;—"I will NEVER leave thee, I will NEVER forsake thee."

This, then, is the fact concerning God. Need you, then, I ask, have the least fear that He will forsake you? If you examine the matter in another light, it may appear that the real ground of fear is in *yourself*. You are the party in danger of forsaking the Lord. We are something like children walking with their father on a journey. The father, with his sobriety and wisdom, keeps on his way towards his destination; but the children are easily diverted in their attention. A butterfly springs up from the grass, and one runs after it; there a cluster of flowers are growing, and another goes to pluck them; yonder a group of children are playing, a third goes and joins in the sports; thus they diverge from the right way, and leave their father. We are travelling to heaven in company with our God. As we proceed on the journey we may be tempted to turn aside, and follow the butterflies, flowers, and companies of this world. We may *forsake* Him in running after these things; but He will never so leave us in the right way, and hide himself from us, that we shall be cast upon our own wisdom and strength to pursue the journey alone. HE NEVER DEPARTS FROM THE GOOD AND RIGHT WAY. While, therefore, we keep ourselves in His company, walking *with* Him as Enoch did, walking *before* Him as David did, we shall enjoy the blessed assurance of an EVER-PRESENT GOD.

"As far from danger as from fear,
While love, Almighty love, is near."

CONTENTMENT.

You wish to be content with your lot, so as not to murmur or complain. This is certainly your privilege as a Christian. You are called to it by the Scripture in its *teachings*. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. xiii, 5). "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. vi, 6, 8). You are called to this by *example*. St. Paul, in the midst of his privations, learned and practised this grace. "I have learned," he says, "in WHATSOEVER state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. iv, 11). Jesus Christ, our Great Master and Example, exhibits this grace in perfection. Although He had not where to lay His head, was the poorest of the poor, was the subject of contumely and reproach, yet who ever heard Him complain? You are called to it by *its own excellency*. "Contentment," says one, "is a pearl of great price; and whoever procures it at the expense of ten thousand desires makes a wise and a happy purchase." It is a great adornment to the soul. It is a feast for the soul. It is satisfaction for the soul, when associated with godliness.

As a means of cherishing it, consider how much better your lot is than millions; how much less you would have if it was given according to moral merit; how short a time you will want anything; how little you will want in the grave, and what an abundance is provided for you in the grace and glory of God. Learn to sing those lines of Bunyan:

"I am content with what I have,
 Little be it or much;
 And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
 Because Thou savest such
 Fulness a burden is to such
 That go on pilgrimage;
 Here little, and hereafter much,
 Is best from age to age."

TENDENCY OF AFFLICTIONS.

The stones which, in their fury, Stephen's persecutors cast at him, gave him an earlier ascent to the presence and glory of Jesus, whom he saw standing at the right hand of God. The boisterous winds which blow favorably for the ship tend to make its passage the shorter, and to drive it the more quickly into its quiet haven. The deluge of waters which came upon the old world raised Noah's ark nearer heaven and the place where it rested in sublime security. It is so with all the afflictions of God's people. Their tendency is to raise them nearer to heaven, bring them closer to Christ, weaken corruptions within them, wean their affections from earth, and lead them to the glorious rest of eternity.

DECISION.

Decision in religion is as necessary as it is in anything of a temporal nature. You should take religion with as much decision as you would an undertaking in life which you knew would yield you an unfailing supply of worldly substance; and once having made your choice, you should allow nothing in earth or hell to rob you of it, or entice you from it. The Saviour teaches you that "no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke ix, 62). If you imagine it possible to be half a Christian and half a sinner at the same time, Christ positively says you cannot:—"No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. vi, 24). If you think to be firm and enduring in the way to heaven without decision, St. James shows the vanity of such a thought:—"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jas. i, 8). It is said of Caleb, by the Lord Himself, "My servant Caleb hath followed me FULLY" (Num. xiv, 24). God held him in high esteem for this, and lifts him up as an example to others. Joshua was a man of decision. "As for me and my house, we WILL serve the Lord" (Josh. xxiv, 15). Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, John

Baptist, Paul, were noble in their decision for God and His cause.

PEACE OF MIND.

If you are desirous of obtaining and keeping this great blessing, the receipt is given you in the Scriptures:—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." Gather up your thoughts, your affections, your desires, your motives, your aims; concentrate and fix them upon God, in the beauties of His holiness, in the love of His nature, in the wisdom of His counsels, in the goodness of His dealings, in the justice of His requirements, in the atonement of His Son and in the work of His Spirit, in the promises of His Word and the provisions of His grace; then shall you trust in Him for all things, and, as a result, enjoy a peace of mind, deep, constant, pure, divine; a peace in its nature like the peace which angels have; a peace which, while all things around are agitated and changed, shall maintain its power and undisturbedness. God is a rock of immutability and eternity; and if you stay your mind on Him, though the storm may rage above you and around you, a sacred peace shall reign in your mind. God is a refuge; and though the enemy, in fury, may hurl the most fiery darts at you, a calm from God shall possess your bosom. Your peace shall be a "*perfect* peace," without defect or sin.

A friend once asked Professor Francke, who founded the Orphan House at Halle, how he maintained so constant a peace of mind. The good man replied, "By stirring up my mind a hundred times a day. Wherever I am, whatever I do, I say, 'Blessed Jesus, have I a share in Thy redemption? Are my sins forgiven? Am I guided by Thy Spirit? Thine I am—wash me again and again.' By this constant converse with Jesus I have enjoyed serenity of mind and a settled peace in my soul."

The mind, while it is in the body, and having to do, more or less, with earthly things, is in danger of wandering from God.

Then its peace is liable to be broken. Hence we need to live as the good man referred to—in the spirit of devotion all the day long. *Here is our security for peace of mind.*

COMFORT IN PRAYER.

From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat;
'Tis found beneath the mercy-seat.

There is a place where Jesus sheds
The oil of gladness on our heads,
A place than all besides more sweet;
It is the blood-bought mercy-seat.

There is a scene where spirits blend,
Where friend holds fellowship with friend;
Though sunder'd far, by faith we meet
Around one common mercy-seat.

Ah! whither could we flee for aid
When tempted, desolate, dismay'd;
Or how the hosts of hell defeat,
Had suff'ring saints no mercy-seat?

There, there on eagle's wings we soar,
And sin and sense molest no more;
And heaven comes down our souls to greet,
While glory crowns the mercy-seat.—*Stowell.*

If pain afflict or wrongs oppress,
If cares distract or fears dismay,
If guilt deject, if sin distress;
In every case still watch and pray.

'Tis prayer supports the soul that's weak;
Though thought be broken, language lame,
Pray, if thou canst or canst not speak;
But pray with faith in Jesu's name.

Depend on Him ; thou canst not fail ;
Make all thy wants and wishes known ;
Fear not ; His merits must prevail :
Ask but in faith, it shall be done.—*Hart.*

CHAPTER III.

(Third Meeting.)

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

To be filled with the Spirit is the privilege of the Christian. St. Paul exhorts the Ephesians, "Be ye filled with the Spirit." He also prays that they might "be filled with all the fulness of God;" and he tells them that they were built on Christ, that they might be the "habitation of God through the Spirit."

But what is it to be filled with the Spirit? It is not to be deified with His Divine person; it is not to be possessed of Him so that free agency and other attributes of our nature will be destroyed thereby. It is to be filled as Elisha was filled with the spirit of Elijah—furnished and completed with the influences, the gifts, and the graces of the Spirit. When you take into your views, sentiments, and estimate of Him, the whole and entire elements of His character—when you partake of all His sacred influences in their variety, efficacy, and harmony, to accomplish your own salvation—when He reigns within you, in the supremacy of His love, holiness, zeal, bringing everything that is opposed to His nature into subjection to His laws—when your emotions and actions, thoughts and desires, all correspond with His character and dispositions—then you may be said to be filled with the Spirit.

Is it possible to estimate the value and importance of being filled with the Spirit? The apostles were filled with the Spirit at the Pentecost, and subsequently, and how nobly they witnessed for their Lord, how blamelessly they lived before their

most malicious enemies, how faithfully and usefully they laboured in the planting of Christianity! Christ was filled with the Spirit, and glorious beyond description were His life and death! Oh to be filled with this Teacher, Comforter, Sanctifier, Guide, Strengtheners, Heavenly Dove, Celestial Fire!

WATCHING UNTO PRAYER.

Let us not think that we have done all our duty in regard to prayer when we have simply offered it in the way we think right. There is something more for us to do in connection with it; we must watch thereto, that is, we must look to see what effect our prayers have upon ourselves and upon God. If you take medicine to cure a complaint of the body you watch after you have taken it to see if it has the effect desired; so you should watch to observe whether your prayers produce any good results in yourself, in strengthening your faith, spiritualising your mind, weakening your corruptions, drawing you nearer to Christ. Watch the effects of your prayers upon God. A man who is shooting at a target not only bends the bow and sends the arrow, but he watches to see if he hits the mark; so you must not only shoot the arrow of prayer up to God, but watch to observe whether it reach His ear and heart. A person in a telegraph office not only works the battery and communicates the message by the electric fluid along the wires to the place of destination, but he watches to see if there is any answer in return; so you should not only send up from your heart a message in prayer to heaven, but watch to ascertain whether it has arrived thither, and whether there is any reply to come. A mother writing to her beloved son in India does more than send her letter; she anxiously watches for an answer; so should you in your prayers.

When we thus watch our prayers, to observe whether they produce any good in ourselves and secure any good from God, it shows that we are concerned about them, it manifests our sincerity; and if the things for which we pray are such as

come within the promises, we are the more likely to secure them.

This spirit of watchfulness should be connected with *all* our prayers. How many prayers have lost their effect upon us and upon God through our indifference about them after they were offered! And how many answers may have been given, and we know nothing about them, because they came when we were not looking for them, or conscious of them when they came!

REJOICING IN CHRIST.

Your faith has brought you to Him, has united you to Him, and given you an interest in Him; and now your interest in Him should lead you to *rejoice* in Him. If *you* do not rejoice in Him, it is enough to make the very stones cry out against you. Shall angels rejoice in Him, when their interest is so limited, and you be silent, when yours is unspeakable and everlasting? Shall the whole creation rejoice in Him as its Creator, and you not rejoice in Him as your *Redeemer*? Shall the sinner rejoice in wickedness, and you not rejoice in His righteousness? Will you allow the worldling to outvie you in his rejoicings over floating pleasures, perishable gain, and vain promotions, while your pleasures in Christ are abiding, your gain enduring, and your promotions real and continuous? See how Abraham "rejoiced" to see even the *day* of Christ! Mary "rejoiced" more in Christ as her Saviour than her son. Simeon rejoiced in Him as God his salvation when only an infant. Matthew made a feast to entertain Him. Zaccheus made haste to give Him a joyful welcome to his house. The jailor, as soon as he believed, rejoiced in Him with all his house. The eunuch, as soon as He knew him, went on his way rejoicing. Some of the apostles even rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Him. We are exhorted to rejoice in the Lord always. Though we see Him not with these eyes of flesh, yet, believing in Him, we are to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Rejoice in His person, as com-

bining and exhibiting all excellencies of beauty, glory, wisdom, power, majesty, and godhead. Rejoice in His mediation; all that He has done for you in the work of redemption. Rejoice in the knowledge of Himself which He has given; in the love to Himself which He has poured into your heart. Rejoice in the means he has appointed to save men, and the personal application of them to yourself. Rejoice in the work He has called you to, and the help He affords to perform it. Rejoice in the light of His countenance, which, better than life itself, shines upon you. Rejoice in the hope of glory and the witness of His Spirit which He has given. There is abundant scope for rejoicing in Christ. Surely with these and kindred things before you, you may "shout aloud for joy," and live on the mountain of beatitude all the day long.

OFFENCES IN THE CHURCH.

The Saviour teaches us, "It is impossible but offences will come." Where is the household, made up of a variety of ages, minds, and dispositions, in which no jarring string was ever heard, in which no ripple ever appeared on the surface, in which no discord ever entered into the spirit? In a world where sin reigns everywhere it is impossible but offences will come. And hence, wherever you look among the children of men, in any relation, form, association, you will find a verification of this principle, to some extent or other. We cannot expect the Church to be exempt purely and absolutely. While there is sin in the Church, while she is connected with earthly things, and while there is so much of imperfect man in her organizations and means, it is impossible but offences will come among its members. We find proofs of this even in the Church as formed and established under the very shadow of the Cross and the Pentecost. The history of the Church since the beginning of it is only a fuller confirmation. The purest churches of the present day tell us offences will come among them. It is only in the Church triumphant in heaven where offences never come.

Seeing, then, that offences will come between members of the Church, it is our imperative duty, according to the spirit of our religion, so to speak, think, act, as to reduce the offences to the smallest number and smallest size. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in us," we must "live peaceably with all men." We must have the wisdom which cometh from above, which is peaceable. Our whims, fancies, self-promotion, and such like, must be sacrificed for peace. Anything save pure, Scriptural, Christian principle, may well be given up in order to prevent offences.

But in case offences do occur between brethren, after such peaceable and pure efforts have been made to prevent them, "Woe unto him by whom they come." He is responsible. Upon him the burden, whatever it is, shall rest. But what are the offended ones to do? Be avenged? No, verily (see Rom. xii, 19—21). Vengeance is the Lord's. Deal in love with him. Heap coals of fire upon him. Do your Christian part to subdue him; and if he repent, forgive him. If he remain obstinate, leave him with the Lord. "I will repay, saith the Lord."

LOSS OF THE MEANS.

To lose the means is very much like losing one's meals; we suffer from faintness, languor, and weakness. To *feel* the loss of the means shows that we have a relish or desire for them, the same as when we feel the loss of our meals; but to lose the means and *not* feel the loss of them is like losing our meals and not feeling the loss of them; it shows that we are sickly and have no appetite. You may be so circumstanced in business, in domestic arrangements, in sickness, in travelling, in living where there are no means, that you cannot attend upon them; but in all such cases you should not forget them, you should desire them, make an effort to get to them, and thus show your spiritual health and appetite to be in a good state, just as a healthy man who, though he had no

meals when the time came, would think of them, desire them, and make effort to secure them.

LUKEWARMNESS.

It is highly dangerous to be lukewarm in religion, for the Head of the Church declares that He will "spew us out of His mouth" if we are "neither hot nor cold." That is to say, He will cast us off from Him as we throw from our mouths a sickly and loathsome article of food. If you feel that this is your state, then awake up to decision and earnestness *at once*. No longer provoke the Almighty. No longer render yourself abominable before Him. As you value union with Christ and participation in His blessing, be earnest for your soul's salvation and the glory of the Redeemer. Seek for the holy fire which shall make you a burning and a shining light. Seek for the Christian promptitude, earnestness, fidelity, consecration, and perseverance, which shall distinguish you as a disciple extraordinary of Him who sacrificed himself in His zeal for your redemption.

MOURNING OVER TROUBLES.

It is a fault to which many Christians are prone when troubles come upon them, to sit down amid the darkness and look at nothing but the frightful things which a gloomy mind conjures before its fancy. They dwell upon sorrow, but think of no joy; they are terrified with the darkness, but cheered by no light that may shine; they fill up the future with things worse than the present, and indulge in no bright hope of deliverance. The ears are closed to words of consolation; the heart is shut to the entrance of hope; the eyes are blinded to the perception of any bright vision. There is a kind of self-abandonment to a moping melancholy of spirit, and a settled form of complaining, moaning, ungrateful utterances. My brother, is this your conduct under troubles? Are you thus sitting sad and desolate, vexed with dark forebodings, and refusing to be comforted? This is a frame of mind utterly

unbecoming a professing Christian. Even natural religion teaches that you should have comfort from a belief in God; but the Christian religion teaches that the comfort you derive from the Saviour should enable you in *everything* to give thanks, and to rejoice evermore. Remember, the purpose of God in your troubles is not to drive you *from* Him, but to draw you closer *to* Him; not that you should in doubt and murmuring leave Him, but *cling* to Him in stronger faith and more earnest prayer. Look away from the darkness of earth to the light of heaven, which shines either around, or beyond, or within; from the troublous waves of life to Him who is our Peace and Comforter, walking in the midst of them as your Salvation.

Seize the precious promises which are given you for your hope and confidence. Gaze upon Him who has left you an example; whose troubles were beyond the endurance of legions of angels, and yet never wished them less. From this country of tribulation look forward to that better one where there shall be "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

ATTENTION TO ALL DUTY.

If we are not careful, we shall find ourselves falling into a snare which has caught multitudes, that is, thinking that we might now and then neglect what we may call *little duties*. Can there be any little duties in a life whose object is to glorify God, and whose destiny is an eternity glorious as heaven or miserable as hell? But suppose there are little duties, are these to be neglected or performed with indifference? Assuredly not. The locking of your door at night is a little duty compared with the duties of the day; but neglect it, and the thief may plunder you of all your hard-earned gains for years. The dropping of one small ingredient in your prescription as given you by the physician may be an insignificant act compared with the compounding of all the rest; but

the neglect of it may nullify the whole in its effects. One little wheel in the machinery may be neglected in examination, and the result may be the destruction of the whole: Little things are connected with great, and exert a mighty influence upon them. The great cannot exist without the little, although the little may exist without the great. It is even so in religion. All duties are connected; and to neglect one is to affect another. Let *little duties* be omitted, and the great ones will soon follow. It is a chief characteristic of greatness to attend to little things. It is so in God, in Christ, in the Spirit. It is so in all who stand high in the Church as eminent for piety and usefulness. Our great Saviour teaches us that "he who is faithful in least is faithful also in much;" from which we may learn that attention to the little things of the Christian life will lead to attention in the great things. By the one we acquire knowledge, strength, love, and fidelity for the other; just as the little things which the infant does prepares it for the greater of childhood, and those of childhood for youth, &c. But the Saviour may also mean that it is in religion as in nature and all things—that the "much" is comprised of the "least," and that therefore he who attends to the "least" is, when the whole is combined, faithful in "much."

OUR WEAK PART.

There is nothing existing of a creature-kind but what may be said to have its weak part. This remark will apply to the Christian. It is not every one, however, that knows where his weak part lies; as the mechanic may not know the weak part of his machine, or the artisan the weak part of his tools, or the traveller the weak part of his conveyance. But when he has discovered the weak part he will, if he be a wise man, pay particular attention to it, and guard against its failure. There are two things for us to keep before us in regard to our weak part—

1. It engages the special attention of our enemies. They will search for it; they will bring their energies to bear upon us in that particular direction. Through our weakness they will show their strength. Achan's weak part was covetousness, and through that Satan ruined him and brought distress upon Israel. Peter's weak part was self-confidence, and through that Satan entered into him and brought about his fearful fall. Demas's weak part was love of this world, and through that Satan wrought in him apostacy from the faith. Alas! how many are now overcome by their enemies through the same or similar weak parts in their Christian character.

2. We should keep more than ordinary watch over our weak part. We should call the attention of the Captain of our salvation unto it, that He may fortify it with His presence. We should at least be as wise in this matter concerning our spiritual life as we are in similar things concerning this life. Do you not particularly take care of the weak part of the body which is most exposed to disease?—the weak part of your house, which may give the thief, or the storm, or the fire, an advantage?—the weak part of your business, which may render you liable to serious difficulties?

My brother, if you know the weak part of your Christian character, on that bestow instant and earnest watchfulness, while at the same time see that none of the rest are neglected.

MUTUAL PRAYER.

Not only are we required to pray personally, each one for himself, but we are exhorted to "pray one for another; to make supplication for all saints." St. Paul, with all his apostolic favours from above, felt the importance of the prayers of his fellow-Christians. "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me *in your prayers to God for me.*" Again he says, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal *praying for us.*" "Brethren, *pray*

for us." "In God we trust that He will yet deliver us; ye also helping together by *prayer for us*." "I trust that through your *prayers* I shall be given unto you."

Thus, on the one side, St. Paul desires the prayers of Christians; and then, on the other, he says that "I make mention of *you* always in *my prayers*." Speaking to Timothy, he says, "I have remembrance of *thee* in *my prayers* night and day." Writing to one of the churches, he says, "Wherefore also *we pray* always for *you*." And again, "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of *you* in *my prayers*."

Here, then, we have the plain duty of mutual prayer, not only enjoined, but beautifully exemplified. The propriety of this duty seems to rest in the union and communion which subsist amongst us as Christians. We are one family, one household, one army, one body, one building, &c. There is, therefore, to arise hence a mutual sympathy in each other's interest; and this is to lead to mutual prayer as one means of promoting that interest.

What an abundance of comfort there is in mutual prayer! How it helps me on the way to heaven to know that I am included in the prayers of all Christ's people! How it warms my affection towards them, and strengthens my union with them! And so my prayers for them, as one of the family of God, not only may afford them similar grace, but reflect upon my own soul increased good. Let us, as Christians, foster more diligently this spirit of mutual prayer.

LONGING FOR HEAVEN.

O, mother dear, Jerusalem!
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end?
Thy joys when shall I see?

O happy harbour of God's saints!
O sweet and pleasant soil!

In thee no sorrows can be found,
No grief, no care, no toil.

No dimming cloud o'ershadows thee,
No cloud, no darksome night;
But every soul shines as the sun,
For God Himself gives light.

Jerusalem! Jerusalem!

Would God I were in thee!
O that my sorrows had an end,
Thy joys that I might see!

Thy walls are made of precious stone,
Thy bulwarks diamond square;
Thy gates are made of orient pearl—
O God, if I were there!—*David Dickson.*

Let me go, the day is breaking,
Earthly scenes are fading fast;
Joys that were my heart awaking,
Hopes and fears are with the past.
Earthly visions now are darkling,
And the city's golden glow
Gleams before me, pure and sparkling
In the distance—let me go!

Lay me gently on my pillow,
Weary are my thorn-pierced feet;
Christ has calmed that boisterous billow,
And the rest beyond is sweet.
Could ye share the glorious vision,
Ye would not detain me so;
Now the homeward gales Elysian
Woo my spirit—let me go.—*Anon.*

CHAPTER IV.

(Fourth Meeting.)

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT.

It is true that the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon the Church, and that we have not to wait and pray for Him in the same sense as the apostles did in the beginning. Nevertheless, it is equally true that He now manifests Himself unto the Church through means, as He did then. Electricity is in the air, but means must be used to combine, concentrate, and make any special use of it. Fire is in the flint, but means must be used to bring it out. Certain properties of life are in the soil, but the agriculturalist, if he wish to bring it out in the form of any particular grain, must use certain means to do so. The steam is in the engine, but there are certain acts which the engineer must perform before it will distribute itself into use. So, doubtless, the blessed Spirit is in the Church, nay, pervades all space, is omnipresent; but He comes forth in the manifestation of Himself through means, as everything else does—as God does, as Christ does.

Do you desire the Holy Ghost? then pray for Him. Wait in the ordinances for Him. Read and search the Scriptures for Him. Watch the signs of His approach. Welcome Him when He comes. Cherish His influences when in the least degree they rest upon you.

The use of the means shall as certainly secure to you the manifestation of the Spirit, as the use of other appropriate means secure to men who seek them, manifestations of certain laws, principles, and sciences which exist in nature.

“If ye, being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask Him?”

LIVING WITHOUT SIN.

To live without sin is the earnest desire, the fervent prayer, and the constant endeavour of every good man ; and the nearer he lives to God the stronger will be this desire. To him, sin is the greatest curse in the universe, and the absence of it the greatest blessing. He would rather be in hell without, than in heaven with it ; for were he in heaven with it he would soon be expelled, and were he in hell without it, he would instantly escape on the wings of his holiness. But how may you live in this world without sin ?—this world so full of sin and sinners, so bestrewed with things calculated to attract or drive into sin, so crowded with invisible evil spirits, seeking to ruin the souls of the holy ? This is a question of importance ; and looking at it only with the eye of carnal reason, the answer is, the thing is impossible. Hence all who have tried to solve the question by reason or philosophy, or have tried to live without sin in the mere strength of nature, have totally failed. What, however, man fails to do, God can accomplish. He has resolved the mystery. Strong, extensive, deep, subtle, as sin is ; many as are its agents and associations ; various as are the temptations to it ; and weak as man is in himself or anything he possesses, to conquer sin and live without it, the Lord, all-wise and powerful, has found out a way by which you may realise your utmost wish, and dwell in this world even without living in sin. He has written unto you His Word, to the end you should not sin ; and if that Word dwell in you, it shall make you *clean*. He has given unto you the promises, that the belief of them may be the means of making you a *partaker of the Divine nature*. He has sent forth the Holy Spirit into your heart, that He may make you a *temple of indwelling God*. He has sacrificed His Son that you might be redeemed from *all iniquity, and purified unto Himself*. He has brought you into the light, as He is in the light, that you might have fellowship with Him and His Son Jesus Christ, and that the blood of Jesus might *cleanse you from ALL sin*. Here is the way ; walk

ye in it. Here is your power by which to slay sin, and live its constant victor.

TRUSTING IN GOD FOR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS.

You trust that God will carry on the work which he has begun within you. How do you expect Him to do this? He will do it only in the same way that He carries on life in your body, and that is, *through the means which you yourself use*. First, God gave you the life of the body, which you never could have derived yourself. Having given you life, and brought you into a living world, He has thus far, and will to the end, perpetuate that life, through the *means* of life which you use. So in your spiritual life, or the work which He has begun within you. If you desire the sincere milk of the Word which He has provided, and drink of it, you will *grow thereby*; and thus God will raise you into higher and stronger spiritual life. If you clothe yourself with the whole armour of God, and fight the good fight of faith, God will by His own armour protect your spiritual life from the murderous assaults of your enemies. If you ask of Him the things you need to promote the work of God within you, He will, according to His promise, bestow them, and so build up and strengthen the good work within you. He has in His religion furnished virtue, knowledge, temperance, &c.; and if you *add* to your faith these things, He will thereby bring you on until you are complete in Him. Walk in the light which He has given, and it shall increase more and more unto the perfect day. Run the race which He has set before you, and you shall in every step get nearer the heavenly goal. Build yourself up in *the love of God*, and you shall rise to a temple filled with God. It is thus that He who has begun the good work within you will perform it until the day of Christ.

EVIL THOUGHTS.

"Some thoughts," says Mason, "ought to be immediately banished as soon as they have found entrance. And if we are

often troubled with them, the safest way will be to keep a good guard on the avenues of the mind by which they enter, and avoid those occasions which commonly excite them. For sometimes it is much easier to prevent a bad thought entering the mind, than to get rid of it when it is entered." The following may be mentioned as the chief evil thoughts against which you should exercise a constant watchfulness.

1. All fretful and discontented thoughts, which harass and chafe the mind to no purpose.

2. Thoughts of anxiety and apprehension, concerning things past, present, or to come, over which you have no control.

3. Angry and wrathful thoughts, concerning any one that has done you an injury in any way.

4. Thoughts of revenge and malignancy towards such.

5. Silly, trifling, and unreasonable thoughts, such as do not agree with the sobriety of reason and religion.

6. All wild, extravagant, romantic thoughts, which lead the mind to things which are merely visionary and fantastical.

7. All impure and unholy thoughts, which taint and pollute the mind.

8. All gloomy and melancholy thoughts, which depress the mind and keep it from the joy of godliness.

9. All unbelieving, infidel, or blasphemous thoughts, concerning God, the Bible, Christianity, and Christians.

10. All vain, proud, and self-righteous thoughts, concerning ourselves.

11. All uncharitable thoughts concerning others.

If the mind is kept free from these thoughts, others of an opposite nature will find access, and you will be blessed in their entertainment.

PRESSURE OF WORLDLY THINGS.

I can easily conceive how you may, even despite your intentions and prayers to the contrary, so enter into the affairs of business that they shall entangle you on every hand; and besides this, be a burden pressing you down in labour, anxiety,

and fear. When this is the case, you must have more than ordinary grace from above to enable you to keep the life of God healthy and vigorous in your soul. Where there is such a pressure of worldly things, the spirit of religion is in danger of suffering in its aspirations and enjoyments. Faith withers, love languishes, confidence gives way, prayer is neglected, the Bible is forgotten, family religious duties lessen in their obligation. In a word, the soul is driven into a land of barrenness and the shadow of death. Guard, then, my brother, against this pressure of worldly things. The less "careful and troubled" you are "about many things," and the less "cumbered about much serving," the more liberty and disposition will you have to take your place with Mary at the Saviour's feet, to learn of Him, and to make choice of the one thing needful, which shall never be taken away from you.

DISCOURAGEMENTS.

While you have discouragements in the way to heaven, be thankful that they are no more numerous and powerful. Relieve yourself with the thought that many before you, and many even now, have as great or greater discouragements. Let them act upon you as incentives to more devoted attachment to Christ, and more earnest attention to the means of grace. While, on the one hand, your discouragements accompany you, do not forget that, on the other hand, are your *encouragements*. If Satan tempts, Jesus succours; if the world draws back, heaven attracts; if men scoff, angels approve; if the flesh is weak, the Spirit is strong; if doubts harass, faith supports; if the hill is difficult, every step brings you nearer the top, and on the top are the many mansions which Christ has prepared for you.

DESIRING TO KNOW THE WILL OF GOD.

The will of God concerning us, His children, is revealed in the Scriptures. We need not study nature, either as we possess it in ourselves, or as it exists around us, in order to find

the will of God. His Word, and that only, contains it in all its fulness; and if you know it as there revealed, you cannot plead ignorance of His will. You are there told what He would have you *be*, and have you *do*. He would have you *be* holy, as He is holy, perfect, as He is perfect; sanctified in body, soul, and spirit, and preserved blameless until the coming of Christ. He would have you filled with the Spirit, cleansed from all filthiness of flesh, made a partaker of the Divine nature, changed into His own image, a temple of the Holy Ghost, a follower of Himself in all holiness. These and similar expressions denote the will of God as to what He would have you *be*. And then as to what He would have you *do*,—this follows from the state and character to which He would have you attain. It corresponds therewith as light with the sun; as sounds with music; as breathing and action with life; as form and size with substance. For instance, He wills that you should obey Him in all things, thank Him for all things, trust Him in all things, love Him with all your powers, witness for Him faithfully and everywhere, work for His glory in doing good among men, praise Him for all the excellencies and glories of His name and works. These are expressions of His will immediately connected with the former.

Brother Christian, if you desire to know the will of God, search the Scriptures in the spirit of candour, humility, prayer, docility, and love; and He who has sent you these letters of truth, your Father, shall soon make clear to you all His will in regard to experimental and practical holiness.

SEEING BY FAITH.

“Faith is sometimes called, and very fitly called, ‘the eyes of the soul.’ For, just as the bodily eye has always before it the things of the world around us, so Faith has always before it the things of the world unseen. When you walk along the road your bodily eye sees, whether you try or not, all the things around you. You walk along and have no need all the time to be trying to see the direction the road takes or the

hindrances in your way. If something were in the way, you would walk round it without any trouble. Now, a perfect Faith would do just the same in spiritual things. God on His eternal throne, Christ on His Cross of love, or pleading ever for His people, the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier, heaven and hell, the constant *presence* of God, the angels and the evil spirits, the way of life and the way of death,—all would be plain, and present, and real to us as the things we see with our bodily eyes.”—*W. W. How.*

“ Faith lends its realising light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly ;
The invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye.”

“ We walk by Faith.” “ Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” “ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, our light affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

As you take great care in preserving the eyes of your body, so exercise great care in preserving faith (the eyes) of your soul. Light is pleasant, and it is a good thing to behold the sun *when* the eyes are *healthy* ; so, with a vigorous faith, how delightful it is to look upon the things of God ! Never allow your faith either to sleep or become blind, for in one or the other state the glorious realities of God are **HID FROM YOUR VIEW !**

FORGETTING THE PAST.

There is a sense in which we should forget the past, and a sense in which we should remember it. We should forget the past so as to prevent it acting injuriously upon the present. The past, undoubtedly, has many things lying out before the reflective eye of an imperfect and sinful nature. There may be wanderings from God in the life, backslidings from Him in the heart, indulgence in besetting sins, neglect of well-known

duties, murmuring at the ways of providence, a voluntary living beneath what we knew to be our Christian privilege, uncharitable judgment in the faults of others, strifes and contentions in the Church. These and many other may be things which arise before us as we cast the mind upon the past. But if our gracious Father has forgiven these, through the merit of our Advocate, and we now stand accepted of Him, we should not think of them so as to discourage us *now*, or in any way to affect the performance of present duty or the enjoyment of present privilege. We may think of the past to produce within us present gratitude to God for His patience and mercy towards us; to cherish a sense of our own unworthiness and our absolute dependence upon Him for preservation in the Divine life; to incite us to closer watchfulness and more unceasing prayer; to stimulate us to more activity in the cause of Christ, and more diligence in the pursuit of the blessings of the covenant of redeeming grace. In this sense St. Paul thought of the past. He could never forget that he had been a blasphemer, and persecutor, and injurious; and as he thus remembered his former life, he considered himself the chief of sinners, saved only by Christ. But in the former sense he says, "Forgetting the things which are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

SEEKING ASSURANCE.

It is possible that in seeking the assurance of your acceptance with God, you are looking for signs and tokens which will never be granted. The Jews of old desired signs of Christ's Messiahship which were out of the way of His will and operations; while they rejected the true and infallible evidences. It may be the case with you in regard to your assurance. If Christ is in you, He witnesses to His indwelling as He did to His incarnation, *by the works which He has wrought within you*. He hath done the works which none other could do. You need not, therefore, inquire, Who shall ascend into heaven to

fetch down my assurance thence? or, Who shall go into the deep, to fetch it up thence? but it is nigh thee, even in thy heart. There it is, in the *light, love, faith, joy, peace, hope, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering*, which He has wrought in you by His Spirit. As the creation gives to the eye, the ear, the mind, assurance of the creating and presiding God; so the new creation may give to you an assurance that you are the subject of grace and the child of God. What more assurance do you want that you have life in your body than your own consciousness, the use of your external senses, and the works which you daily perform? If you have the Spirit's witness and the use of the senses of the soul in religion, and the practice of good works in your life,—these are the scriptural elements of assurance. They are sufficient. If you have them only in part, appreciate what you have, and seek for more in the use of means. If you have none, then you have need to begin with first principles. Repent and believe the Gospel, that Christ may come within you to begin His mighty deeds of grace, and give you therein the *true* assurance that you are reconciled to God.

THE PATERNAL GOODNESS OF GOD.

There's not a bird, with lonely nest
In pathless wood or mountain crest,
Nor meaner thing, which does not share,
O God! in Thy paternal care!

There's not a being now accurst
Who did not taste Thy goodness first;
And every joy the wicked see
Received its origin from Thee.

Each barren crag, each desert rude,
Holds Thee within its solitude;
And Thou dost bless the wanderer there,
Who makes his solitary prayer.

In busy mart and crowded street,
No less than in the still retreat,
Thou, Lord, art near, our souls to bless
With all a parent's tenderness !

And every moment still doth bring
Thy blessings on its loaded wing ;
Widely they spread through earth and sky,
And last to all eternity.

Through all creation let Thy Name
Be echoed with a glad acclaim !
That let the grateful churches sing ;
With that let heaven for ever ring !

And we, where'er our lot is cast,
While life, and thought, and feeling last,
Through all our years, in every place,
Will bless Thee for Thy boundless grace !

Baptist W. Noel.

CHAPTER V.

(Fifth Meeting.)

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

WHEN the Holy Spirit descends upon a man, He imparts unto him a spiritual power which he did not before possess, and which he could not derive from any other source in the universe. Was not this the case with the apostles? Could Judaism, Pharisaism, Philosophy, the Sanhedrim, the Cæsars, have invested these men with power and authority equal to that which came upon them in connection with the descent of the Holy Spirit? Even the teachings and personal human presence of Jesus failed in this. As though they had been

the subjects of perpetual weakness during His sojourn with them, He says unto them, just before His departure, "Ye shall receive power *after that* the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Their history subsequently to the Pentecost is ample illustration of the fulfilment of His promise. Their power of faith, of love, of patience, of zeal, of self-sacrifice, of holiness, of miracles ; their power in preaching, praying, confronting enemies, confounding error, arresting sin, conquering devils, bringing sinners to the Cross, and accomplishing works which even Jesus in His human sojourn did not accomplish, shows the kind of power which came upon them, and which the Holy Spirit bestows upon those who give Him a welcome into their hearts. My brother, you may not in several respects attain to an equality of power with the apostles ; but in all respects which belonged to them *as Christians*, you may equal them, if not surpass them. By the indwelling of the Holy Ghost you may acquire a power which shall distinguish you in the ways of life with all the characteristics of a Christian, for which the apostles were distinguished. There is no change in the Spirit ; there is no change in human capabilities, and therefore *you* may "receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." If the Holy Ghost *is* upon you, it is your privilege to have power over every evil way of life, every evil temper of heart ; power over every enemy which attacks you ; power in every duty which is enjoined upon you ; power to realise every promise made over to you in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is almighty in power ; let Him work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure, and every other power He shall subdue to His. The power of self, the power of sin, the power of the world, the power of Satan, all shall yield before His power, as the power of disorder, darkness, deformity, and death, retired before Him when He brooded over the chaos of primeval things.

DESIRING TO BE USEFUL.

The desire to be useful is most consistent with the Christian

character, and most laudable in him who possesses it. Cherish, then, this desire; and let the desire grow and strengthen until it shall lead you to actual *efforts* of usefulness. The love of Christ, the value of the soul, the sinful condition of the world, the advantages of religion, the promised reward in heaven, the blessedness of doing good, the examples of usefulness in the Scriptures and in the Church, may be viewed as considerations to foster this desire, and to encourage and stimulate you in carrying it out.

The opportunities and spheres of usefulness are very many. As a young person, you have your sphere in which you can exert your influence for good. As a father, or husband, or master, or servant, you have yours. As a mother, a wife, a sister, a friend, you have yours. It may not be difficult for you to ascertain your sphere, and then in that to carry out your desire to be useful. You may be useful in the exercise of all the gifts and graces God has given you, whether many or few, great or small. The smallest star can shine as well as the greatest one. The least wheel in the machine can do its part as well as the largest. Fill the sphere in which you move according to your abilities, and that is all the Great Master asks of you. You may be useful in many ways—as a teacher of the children in the Sabbath-school; as a distributor of tracts among the poor; as an inviter of persons to the house of God; as a visitor of the sick and the outcast. In these and similar ways, if not in the higher, you can serve your day and generation; promote the cause of Christ, and secure the approval of the Head of the Church.

ACTIVITY OF REAL RELIGION.

Let this be well understood, that true religion is a living, active principle, wherever it is found. Mere formal religion is as different from the real, as a painted flower from one which grows in the garden; as the wax figure of a man from the living man who made it; as the picture rainbow from the one which God rears in the heavens. A man may keep the

outside of religion with great decency; but real religion demands the *interior* to be taken care of; and *that* cared for with diligence, gives proper shape to the other; the same as a healthy blood and a well-ordered system give healthy action to the life. Real religion is active because healthy. It is active in all graces and duties; active not only when the public eye can see and the public tongue applaud, but when none but God or angels are the spectators. It is active in closet duties; in family duties; in heart searchings; in self-denials; in soul-saving labours; in alms-deeds; in *all* the ways which correspond with its pure and divine nature as coming from its source in heaven.

My brother, let your religion thus evince itself to be *real* by being *ACTIVE*.

PEACE OF CHRIST.

The peace of Christ is your right, if you are His disciple; for it is your *legacy*. And this peace is infinitely more valuable than that which the world gives. It is pure, deep, powerful, lasting, increasing. "The world's peace," as Henry says, "begins in ignorance, consists with sin, and ends in endless troubles; Christ's peace begins in grace, consists with no allowed sin, and ends at length in everlasting peace." Oh, to have the same kind of peace which our blessed Lord had! To dwell in a constant calm of soul, unruffled by sin, unagitated by the world! A peace not stagnant, but flowing; not muddy, but clear as crystal; not dead, but living; not stoical, but awake to all the interests of time and eternity! May the Holy Spirit now establish *this* peace within you!

BENEFIT OF AFFLICTION.

You have been afflicted, and thereby kept from the house of God and communion with His people. But have you not found that even affliction has been made a means of grace to you? Has not the fiery furnace been as the house of God, where you have met with Him and worshipped Him in lowly

subjection, earnest love, and humble praise. And as you have gone often from His sanctuary, saying, "It was good to draw nigh unto God," so you have come forth from the furnace testifying, "It is good for me to be afflicted." Like the three Hebrew worthies who were bound when cast into the fire, perhaps you entered affliction with the bands of worldliness or religious indifference or unbelief about you ; but, like them, you have come out with bands burnt asunder, free to enter more spiritually, earnestly, and believingly into the duties and privileges of the Christian life. The process which He adopted has been painful to flesh and blood, and trying to your faith ; but it has been purifying, invigorating, healthful. Would you have exchanged your pains, your restless nights, nay, even sometimes your heartsinkings, with the prospect of losing all these heavenly blessings ? You have now a faith in life and exercise such as you never had before ; a peace more deep, more settled, more divine ; a joy more pure, solid, heavenly ; a zeal more inflamed, intelligent, regular ; a prospect into heaven, clearer, more hopeful, and inspiring ; in a word, have you not found that you have made universal gain in the spiritual life by affliction ? Then glorify your heavenly Father in these things. Administer comfort and sympathy to such as are now afflicted. Be careful not to relapse from this grace. Abide in it with growth, and then, brother, you shall find what Paul taught, and what he now feels, " Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

CONSECRATION TO GOD.

You cannot read the Scriptures and not see that consecration to God is rendered an imperative duty upon us. It is included in this verse, to say no more, " I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Here is the offering to be consecrated—the body, by which is undoubtedly meant the *whole man*. Here is

the object of the consecration—"God." Here is the motive to consecration—"the mercies of God." Here is the character of the offering—a sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. Here is the nature of the act—"a service, a reasonable service." In wishing, therefore, to be consecrated to God, you are agreeing with the Divine injunction and with human reason. Do not, however, be satisfied with the wish. Labour to carry out into practical action the desire you express. Delay not in this work. The duty binds *now*. The temple is here, the High Priest is here, the altar is here, the God of all is here. Where is the sacrifice? Are you now ready for the holy immolation? Let it be done *deliberately*; as that which you have thought upon, which you see to be just and right, according both with reason and Scripture; so that afterwards you cannot say you did it ignorantly, and in haste. Let it be a consecration *entire* and *unreserved*. Keep nothing back. With yourself, give all things which you call your own. Say unto God, "Take, not only me, but mine; and not only mine, but me." Let it be a consecration for *all coming time*. Understand this—that henceforth you reckon yourself dead unto sin; the Lord's *fully* and *for ever*. Let the consecration in spirit, if not in act, be renewed daily. If you shall thus deliberately, resolutely, for all time, without reserve, consecrate yourself to Him, to be, to do, to go, to suffer, whatever He may ordain or permit, you shall then be blessed beyond conception. The eternal God shall become yours as you have become His, and if you remain faithful, the interchange and union shall *never*, no NEVER, be reversed.

SATAN AS AN ENEMY.

Satan is the enemy of every Christian; and he is an *indefatigable* enemy. He never tires in his temptations to ensnare souls, with a view to destroy them. He "*walketh* about seeking whom he may devour." This denotes that his main object is to ruin the souls of men; and that he does it in a deliberate, calm, systematic way. He walks about observing

times, places, circumstances, characters, all with a view to devour. He does as the lion, to whom he is compared. Observe his gentle tread, his fiery, searching eye, his subtle plans, his secret ambushes, his hidden schemes, his concealed name, nature, and character; and when he spies one anywhere of whom he can take advantage, see how the lion is developed, in the rush, the pounce, the seizure, the tearing, the destruction.

My brother, do not forget that your adversary, the devil, seeks to destroy you. Study his true character. Be not ignorant of his devices. Resist him steadfastly. Avoid his enticements. Take to yourself the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil. Though so wise, sagacious, powerful, you need not fall into his hands. You are safe while you keep in company with Jesus; while you watch and pray; while you maintain a faithful union with Christ's people.

"If faith surround your heart,
Satan shall be subdued;
Repelled his every fiery dart,
And quench'd in Jesu's blood.
Jesus hath died for you;
What can His love withstand?
Believer, hold fast your shield, and who
Shall pluck you from His hand?"

WEAKNESSES.

You may have your weaknesses, my brother; and to have them is only an evidence that you are yet in the body, this side the "pearly gates." It need form no source of discouragement. It ought rather to form a reason for hope and a stimulus for diligence. You may have weakness of *faith*—so had the disciples at one time; but they did not thence infer that they had no faith, or that their faith could not be strengthened. They at once went to their Lord, and prayed Him to *increase*

their faith. Do you likewise. You may have weakness in *love*; so have many of God's people; but it would be wrong to say you had no love at all, or that it could not be strengthened. "Follow after love," and you shall "abound in it more and more." You may have weakness in *prayer*; but this shall be remedied by exercise in the duty, more frequent and sincere. You may have weakness in *doing good*; but you shall receive greater power for this, as you increase in faith, love, and prayer. You may have weakness in resisting temptation, taking up your cross, overcoming your besetment, &c. Whatever your weakness is, whether general or particular, applying to your whole spiritual life or only one part of it, that weakness may be removed in some measure, if not entirely. If you had weakness of the body, you would adopt that mode of eating, drinking, sleeping, exercise, which your physician prescribed, and hereby you would hope to improve. Do thus in regard to your *spiritual weakness*. Carry out the counsels as given you by Jesus Christ and His apostles in their teachings, and you shall *for certain* grow in strength, until you can say as St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me."

COMFORTS OF RELIGION.

Avail yourself of the comforts of your religion in the midst of your manifold trials of life. Is there no comfort for you in the favour of God, in the sympathy of Jesus, in the assurance of the Spirit, in the hope of heaven, in the sweet promises of the Scriptures? Surely these, with other associate comforts, ought to alleviate your sorrows and help you to sustain the varied troubles of life. I have read of a river in Peru that only runs in the day and is dry at night; because in the day the sun melts the snow on the hills, but at night the cold freezes it again. This somewhat represents the comforts of this world. In the sunshine of peace and prosperity they flow rapidly; but in the night of affliction they congeal and cease to run. This is not so with the comforts of religion

They flow most strong and rapid in the seasons of trouble, to refreshen the soul and preserve it from faintness and death. Hezekiah, when the sentence of death was past upon him, could say, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." So David found that the *comforts of God* delighted his soul in the midst of all his tribulations. As an old writer says, "When disquieting thoughts did swarm within his breast, as thick as motes in the sunbeams, and did continually ascend like sparks from a flaming furnace, which the *crown* upon his head could not charm, which the *sceptre* in his hand could not allay, which the delights and pleasures of his court could not sweeten, then did the comforts of God, as so many fresh springs in the midst of all his estuations, both glad and calm his unquiet and perplexed spirit."

It is true that your comforts in religion may not always equally abound; but they should never be like waters that fail or streams that dry up. They need not be. Let your faith always connect you with Christ, that ever-flowing fountain; and though you may sometimes be *drawn low*, you shall never be *drawn dry*. Your faith, as a *conduit-pipe*, shall convey some, if not all, the comforts which are in Him. And when you can only realise a *drop*, take that, and it shall be a cordial; when you can only get a star in the opening of the dark cloud, rejoice, the fulness shall come, and the bright sunshine shall appear.

CLEAVING UNTO THE LORD.

It is your highest wisdom and greatest safety to cleave unto the Lord. Forsake Him not for a moment. Follow Him whithersoever He goeth. Through evil report or good report; through the thick darkness or the clear sunlight; in the fiery conflict or in the glorious victory; along the path of safety or on the edges of frightful precipices; when the multitude clamour for His blood, or when they fill the air with shouts of Hosannas, cleave to Him. In the frequency and power of

your prayers ; in the exercise and hold of your faith ; in the fervour and fidelity of your friendship ; in the constancy and fulness of your obedience, cleave unto the Lord your God. This was the advice Moses and Joshua gave to the children of Israel, as a means of safety from their enemies, and as a guarantee that all that the Lord had promised them He would fulfil. As the ivy cleaves to the oak, so you should cleave to the Lord, feeling that you can only grow while you cling to Him. As the husband cleaves to the wife and the wife to the husband, in mutual affection and confidence, so you should cleave unto the Lord, to whom you are married in solemn covenant, so that you may be "one spirit." As the child cleaves to the parent for provision, for clothing, for comfort, for instruction, for protection, so you should cleave unto the Lord for all that you need. As the branch cleaves unto the vine, drawing thence its life by which its foliage and its fruit are produced, so you should cleave unto the Lord for all spiritual life, by which the verdure of a good profession and the fruit of holy living may be yielded to Him. As the arm cleaves to the body, and is moved and regulated by the will of the head, so you should cleave unto the Lord, and in all things be guided by His gracious will. Thus cleave unto the Lord, brother, and the mountains shall more easily be moved from their foundations than you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord.

TRUST IN GOD.

The child leans on its parent's breast,
Leaves there its cares, and is at rest ;
The bird sits singing by his nest,
And tells aloud
His trust in God, and so is blest
'Neath every cloud.

He hath no store, he sows no seed,
Yet sings aloud, and doth not heed ;

By flowing stream or grassy mead
 He sings to shame
 Men, who forget, in fear of need,
 A Father's name.

The heart that trusts for ever sings,
 And feels as light as it had wings;
 A well of peace within it springs :
 Come good or ill,
 Whate'er to-day, to-morrow brings,
 It is His will! *Isaac Williams.*

"Look," said Luther, as he saw one evening from the window of his house a little bird taking its rest for the night upon a branch of a tree in the garden, "how that little fellow preaches faith to us all. He takes hold of his twig, tucks his head under his wing, and goes to sleep, *leaving God to think for him.*"

"To trust God," says Feltham, "when we have securities in our own iron chest is easy, and not thankworthy. But to depend on Him for what we cannot see, as it is more hard for man to do, so it is more acceptable to God when done, for in that act we make confession of His deity."

"Trust in the Lord at ALL TIMES." "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved." "Under His wings shalt thou trust." "None that trust in Him shall be desolate." "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

CHAPTER VI.

(Sixth Meeting.)

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

As a Christian, you are a tree of the Lord's right-hand planting. You are planted in His vineyard on purpose to bear fruit to His glory, and the fruit which you are expected to bear is the fruit of the Spirit who dwells within you and animates you. As the peculiar life of which a tree partakes gives character to its fruit, so the peculiar Spirit, the Holy Spirit, gives character to the fruit which you bear. That you might know what that fruit is the Apostle Paul particularises it in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, the twenty-second and twenty-third verses. "The fruit of the Spirit is love," as shed abroad in the heart by His own agency—love to God as the holiest and best of beings, and love to man as fellow-creature, and love to Christians as fellow-heirs of the same inheritance. "Joy," a mind untroubled and happy amid the depressions and vexations of life. "Peace," a serenity of mind which arises from the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. "Long-suffering," a patient endurance of the evil doings and evil principles of men, both as they affect ourselves and the glory of God. "Gentleness," returning a blessing for a curse and a smile for a frown. "Goodness," the flowing out of our bounty in a variety of ways upon those who have need of it. "Faith," which is the "substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." "Meekness," which subdues and restrains anger, and makes us like Jesus, who was "meek and lowly." "Temperance," which is such a use of all the things of God as answers the ends for which they are given.

If the Spirit of the Lord Jesus dwell in you, these are the

"fruit" which you produce in your life. It is for you to examine the fruit, whether it be much or little, whether it be perfect or defective. As the gardener is careful of the life of his tree, that it may yield good and much fruit, so should you nourish the Spirit within you, that He may produce the more fruit, in quality and measure, to the praise of God.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

Let this be your daily, your unfailing motto. This is true religion in principle and practice. As you sail over the ocean of life, look unto Jesus to steer at the helm, to command the winds and the waves, to give shelter in the storm and peace in the tempest, to guide you clear of every reef and quicksand, to bring you to the desired haven. As you fight the good fight of faith, look to Jesus as your Captain to command you, to help you, to provide the armour, and to bring you off more than conqueror. As a pilgrim travelling through this wilderness, look to Jesus for provision, for an open way, for safe progress, and for an ultimate entrance into the city of habitation. As a scholar, taking lessons in the school of life, look to Jesus, to teach you as no man can, in all the ways, by all the means, and upon all the subjects, which His wisdom shall select. As one who has to form a character for Divine approval for ever, look unto Jesus as your Example. God is ever well pleased in Him; and the nearer you approach Him in character the more God will approve of you. As one that is a sinner by nature and by practice, look unto Jesus for the present, the free, the full, the everlasting salvation contained in His precious blood. In all your tribulation, look to Him for peace. In all your prayers, look to Him as your Mediator, to present them to God. In all your sorrows, look to Him for His joy. In all your cares, look to Him to bear them for you. In all your temptations, look to Him for grace to succour and to deliver. In all your disappointments and losses in life, look to Him for certainty in His promise and gain in His glory. In all the means of grace at home and with God's people, look

to Him as the medium of all blessings. When your flesh and heart fail you, look to Him as the strength of your heart and your portion for ever. Thus, let looking to Jesus be the principle and practice of *your* religion.

SLAVISH FEAR.

As one of God's children, you should be exempt from the fear which hath torment. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father." With this gracious, loving Spirit dwelling in you, and assuring you of your sonship with God and your membership in the household of faith, what reason have you to fear? The man whose sins are unforgiven, whose guilt of conscience is uncanceled, who has not made his peace with God, *he* may fear. It becomes him to stand in awe. On the brink of ruin, the law claiming satisfaction, vengeance waiting to be poured out, he ought indeed to fear lest he be taken away with a stroke, and a great ransom cannot deliver him. But with you it is different. Reconciled unto God, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, enjoying the testimony of the Spirit, encouraged with a hope of heaven, having access to the throne of grace and the exceeding great and precious promises made over to you, you ought to "rejoice evermore." You ought to have a confidence which, while it is not vain and empty, shall keep you in peaceful assurance unto the end. Listen to what your Father, God, says unto you. "I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper." "Thus saith the Lord, Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." "The Lord of hosts is with you, the God of Jacob is your refuge." With such comfortable words spoken to you by God, surely you may give to the winds all your fears which are calculated to give distress. You may with boldness go on from strength to strength, until you shall appear in Zion before God.

GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR LOT.

Let it be your endeavour to glorify God in that station of life in which you are placed by His providence. Do not fail in this through an anxiety to be somewhere else, where you think you could glorify Him much better. My brother, cannot He best judge for you? Does not He know your capacities? Be faithful in the least, and then He will give you more. Serve Him where you are, and He will probably promote you to the place of your desire. "If an excellent sculptor," says Bates, "be employed to carve a statue, whatsoever the material be, he may use as much skill in carving upon an ordinary stone as upon the finest marble. So, whatsoever thy condition is in the world, thou mayest glorify God in it, and bring praise to His name, and show as excellent grace as in the highest condition. He that grinds at the mill may glorify God as well as he that sits upon the throne."

GRACE AND GLORY.

God has given you grace, that it may by its operations produce glory—the glory of regeneration, the glory of purity, the glory of usefulness, the glory of victory over self and all your enemies, and finally the glory of heaven. This last and consummate glory cannot be reached but by the operations of grace on earth, producing the previous degrees of glory. Grace and glory are so closely connected that they can scarcely be separated. They "are one and the same thing," says Bishop Hopkins, "in a different print, in a smaller and greater letter. Glory lies couched and compacted in grace, as the beauty of a flower lies couched and concealed in the seed."

BLAMING THE DEVIL.

There is a possibility of us laying more blame to the devil than really belongs to him, especially after we have fallen into sin. We do this with a view to justify ourselves from guilt

and pacify our conscience. It is doubtless true that he has a great deal to do with the fall and backsliding of some Christians. But if the matter be well examined, it will appear that the blame is attributable as much to ourselves as to him. If it be observed, you will find that when a godly man in Scripture fell into sin he did not cast the fault upon Satan. It is true Adam and Eve did, but there was reason for this, because they had no sinful nature to tempt them; but after their fall sinful nature tempted them as much or more than Satan. It is said that Satan stood up and tempted David to number the people; but David does not say this. He says, "*I have sinned greatly, and I have done very foolishly.*" Peter, after his fall, does not attach the blame to Satan. Were we always attentive to duty, he would have no power over us. Did we watch and pray, we should fall into no temptation which he might place before us. Did we walk in the light as God is in the light, and have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanse us from all sin, Satan would have no more power over us than he had over the Saviour in the wilderness. "The prince of this world cometh," He said, towards the close of His life, "and hath nothing in Me." Alas! does not Satan often come to us and find that our hearts are as flax, ready to take fire at the least touch; or as gunpowder, which upon the first spark explodes. Let us, then, not be so ready to heap reproach upon Satan for his cunning and power in trying to deceive us. Let us rather condemn ourselves that we carry about with us natures so susceptible of his influence. Let us mainly be employed in possessing ourselves of a purity like Christ's, so that when he comes he shall find nothing in us. While we are diligent in resisting the devil, let us be diligent in *fortifying ourselves*.

BELIEVING AND FEELING.

You say, "I could believe if I felt!" This may be; but consider whether, in that case, your faith would not be changed into *sense*? However much you may like to have feeling

before faith, it cannot be. It is not in the nature of religious things that it should be so. This may be illustrated in a variety of ways. You do not expect to see before you open your eyes, nor do you expect to be satisfied when you are hungry before you eat, nor do you expect to feel cured of a disease before you have taken the medicine prescribed by the physician. Neither can you see the light of saving truth, and feel all its renewing influence, until you have opened your eyes of faith. Would you feel the satisfying nature of Gospel grace, you must *partake* of it by *faith*. Would you be cured of all your spiritual diseases, you must first take the remedy which the Great Physician prescribes. Feeling should be a secondary thought with you. While you look to feeling first, you are placing the effect where the cause should be; you are expecting an impossibility. You are, in one word, displacing Christ as the object of faith, and substituting feeling. If you could feel you would believe. What is that but making feeling your Saviour, and resting in that as you ought to rest in Jesus. Your duty is to believe, according to the command, and then to leave the feeling to follow. You are not commanded to feel, but to believe. You are not saved by feeling, but by believing: "he that believeth shall be saved." You do not overcome the world by feeling, but by faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." You do not walk or stand by feeling, but by faith: "For we walk by faith:" "We stand by faith." The man with the withered hand believed, and then felt his hand cured; so the leper, so the blind man, &c. These are emblems of faith and its effects now. Believe, and then feel. Let this be your course, until you believe yourself into the feeling of heaven's happiness and glory.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

This is a duty, my brother, imperative upon you from the Scriptures themselves. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves." If you think there is any malformation going on in any part of your person, you

examine it; so you should examine the fears, doubts, and failings of your life. If anything is going wrong in your business, your watch, your family, you examine to ascertain the nature, cause, and extent of the wrong; so you should examine yourself to ascertain whether you are in the faith. If you take a sovereign, you ring it, to see whether it be genuine or counterfeit; examine your religion for the same purpose. Is it important that a man practise examination in these things, and others of very much less importance?—how necessary that you should do so in the matters of spiritual and eternal things! Whether *you* examine yourself, be assured you *will be* examined. Satan will do it, the world will do it, God will do it. Satan will do it to ruin you; the world will do it to expose you to ridicule; God will do it to judge you righteously, that He may righteously fix your destiny for ever. Attend to this duty in the fear of God, in the exercise of prayer, taking the Word of God for your guide. Do it faithfully, earnestly, regularly. It will promote depth of piety, self-knowledge, purity of heart and life, all the graces of righteousness and fruits of the Spirit.

“’Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours,
And ask them what report they bore to heaven,
And how they might have borne more welcome news.”

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

How great is the privilege of communion with God! To enter into His presence and bow at His footstool, an humble suppliant, is more ennobling than to be vested with the gorgeous clothing of earthly monarchs, and more blessed than to be one among the happiest of this world's sons. That a worm should hold converse with the Infinite; that a sinner should speak to the High and the Holy One; that a beggar covered with rags, besmeared with filth, and filled with corruption, should hold intercourse with the King of kings, is a wonder of wonders! It is all of mercy in God, through our Lord

Jesus Christ. "Consider," says St. Chrysostom, "how august a privilege this is, when angels are present, when cherubim and seraphim encircle with their blaze the throne, that a mortal may approach with unrestrained confidence, and converse with heaven's dread Sovereign. Oh! what honour was ever conferred like this? When a Christian stretches forth his hands to pray and invokes his God, in that moment he leaves behind him all terrestrial pursuits, and traverses on the wings of intellect the realms of light; he contemplates celestial objects only, and knows not of the present state of things during the period of his prayer, provided that prayer be breathed with fervency."

Esteem this privilege according to its honour and worth. Let your communion with God be frequent. Enter into the holiest, and come as near to Him as the blessed Mediator can bring you. See Him face to face, as Father and child. Speak to Him through your High Priest. Pour out your heart before Him. Let Him be the centre to your soul, around whom it shall revolve in peaceful serenity amid all the agitations and strifes of life. As that which moves in a circle has the least motion when nearest the centre, so your soul when nearest God, its centre, in holy communion, has the least of fears, doubts, and sorrows. The clouds touch not the sun; if we live in near communion with God we may see the clouds of life, but shall live *above* them.

TEMPTATION TO THE LAST.

We can hardly expect that Satan will fail to use his liberty while he has it. It seems to be one of the privileges allowed him in this world to tempt the people of God; and to tempt them, not only once, twice, or thrice, but repeatedly; not only in the beginning of their life for God, but to the end. If he can trip the steps of a new convert, he has done something for the gratification of his malice against Christ; but if he can turn an old traveller in the way from his course to heaven, he is elated with joy, and holds a jubilee in hell. Hence you find

sometimes that his temptations are more desperate at the end than at the beginning. Like the manslayer pursuing his prey, while he is on the road he may have hope of overtaking him, but as he nears the gates of the city, and sees him about to enter the safe enclosure, into which he knows *he* cannot enter, he musters all his force to overtake him, and if he cannot lay hold of the man he will thrust his weapons at him with all the fury he can command. It is thus Satan often does with the saints. The Saviour's agony in the garden may be mentioned as an instance of the determination of the enemy to seize the soul before it leaves the body. Many eminently holy and useful men have passed through severe conflicts on their dying beds. Dr. Payson, a noble saint of God, had a fearful conflict ere he entered the celestial city. Do not, then, think it strange that you should be tempted, after so many years spent in the Saviour's service. Not only look at it as ordinary *now*, but expect it so long as you are in the wilderness. And while you suffer in any degree from his assaults, remember that the time of Satan's access to you is growing shorter every day. If you resist him in the faith, all the fiery darts he may hurl at you, all the false accusations he may raise against you, all the slime he may cast upon you, shall not defile your garments. You shall, as though there were no devil, through the blood of the Lamb, appear faultless before God. *Then*, O joyful thought, temptation shall cease FOR EVER.

PANTING AFTER JESUS.

Dear Jesu, when, when will it be
That I no more shall break with Thee ?
When will this war of passions cease,
And my free soul enjoy Thy peace ?

Here I repent and sin again ;
Now I revive, and now am slain ;
Slain with the same unhappy dart
Which, oh ! too often wounds my heart.

When, dearest Lord, when shall I be
 A garden seal'd to all but Thee?
 No more exposed, no more undone,
 But live and grow to Thee alone?

'Tis not, alas! on this low earth
 That such pure flowers can find a birth;
 Only they spring above the skies,
 Where none can live till here he dies.

Then let me die, that I may go
 And dwell where those bright lilies grow;
 Where those blest plants of glory rise,
 And make a safer Paradise.

No dang'rous fruit, no tempting Eve,
 No crafty serpent to deceive;
 But we like gods indeed shall be:
 O let me die that life to see.

Great ever-living God, to Thee,
 In essence One, in persons Three,
 May all my works their tribute bring,
 And every age Thy glory sing. AMEN.

Bp. Reynolds.

CHAPTER VII.

(Seventh Meeting.)

LOOKING BACK.

Do not look back, with a view to return to your former state. Surely Canaan before is better than Egypt behind; and the liberty, the manna, the cloud of glory, &c., on the way, with all the difficulties of briars, thorns, enemies, scarcity, are even better than was Egypt, with its slavery, leeks, onions, and afflictions. But you say, "May I not look back, if I do

not go?" Not if you have the *wish* to go back. Lot's wife did not *go* back to Sodom, but she looked back with the desire to return, and hence her punishment. Guard, then, against this, for it will bring a punishment in its very bosom.

Do not look back to past experience in order to find evidences of present piety. If you have no evidences of present piety but what come from the past, then you have need to stand in suspicion over the reality of your religion. You never think of going back in life twenty or ten years, or even days, to ascertain whether you are *now alive*. It is not *recollection* of past life, but *consciousness* of present life, that satisfies you that you now live. So it is not the witness you *had*, but the witness you *have*, to which you should look.

Do not look back with a view to recount your trials, your failings, your backslidings, so that the review shall act discouragingly upon you now. You may have enough of these at present. Let the past suffice. Forget those that are behind.

Do not look back with a view to raise any ill-feeling, or jealousy, or envy, or quarrel with any of your brethren. Even as God treats the past and now lives in love and peace with us, so let us do with our brethren.

If you can in any way increase your humility, inflame your love, strengthen your hope, incite your soul to higher praise, and urge your whole being to a more rapid progress in the way to heaven, then you may look back with great advantage. But these things will be as well or better realised by *looking forward*. There is *your house, your treasure, your home, your brethren, your glory, your God and Father, your Saviour, your everlasting all*.

SUFFERING AND GLORY.

It is very natural for you to wish for the glory without the suffering; but to realise what you wish would be contrary to the order of things, as established in the economy of grace or in the economy of nature. The sun often struggles with the black

cloud before his glory appears in the brilliant sunshine of the heavens; the diamond and jewel lie covered in darkness and refuse before they sparkle in the monarch's crown. The marble must be cut and hammered before it stands a polished part in the great building which adorns the metropolis of the world. The silver and gold must pass through the furnace before they receive the glory of purity and superscription and image of the reigning king. So it must be with you, my brother. Now is your suffering time; the glory-time will follow. Now is the hour and power of darkness; but your "light shall break out as the morning," and your "darkness be as the noonday." Now you are covered over with the veil of flesh and hid in the humanity of earth; but you shall ere long become a beautiful gem in the diadem of the King of Glory. Now you must submit to the various operations of God in His providence and grace; but when His work is finished in you He will make you a part of that glorious building of eternity, which is the temple of God and the glory of all things. The patriarchs passed through suffering to the glory which they now possess; so did the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs. That divine glory which encircles the name, the nature, the works, the worship, of Jesus as Mediator, all *followed* the suffering which He endured on earth. His suffering was inexpressibly great, but short-enduring. His *glory* can only be measured by God, and its duration is for ever. You would not, I am sure, wish to go to glory in a different way to what your Saviour went. Endure, then, your suffering, whatever it is, with patience. It must, at the longest, only be short; but your glory is unspeakable and for ever. Your suffering is not to be compared with your glory. The one is "light," and "but for a moment;" the other is "A FAR MORE EXCEEDING AND ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY."

CONFORMITY TO CHRIST.

It is conformity to Christ, my brother, that makes you a Christian. As, therefore, you desire to be a Christian, this

should be your earnest study and diligent pursuit. The young artist studies conformity to his master in his rules and practice, that he may as far as possible attain to equality of skill and perfection. Let Jesus be your Master, whose precepts you shall study, and whose practice you shall imitate. The sculptor forms his statue according to the ideal or real model which he has before him. Your real model is Christ, and to Him you should endeavour to conform the entire inner life of your soul and the outer life of your body. You are called of the Spirit, justified by grace, and adopted into the Divine family, that you might be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. viii, 29). It was the earnest aim of St. Paul to know Jesus, "and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. iii, 10).

ALL GLORY TO CHRIST.

Whatever excellencies of life and happiness of heart you have attained, neither yourself nor any other creature must share in the glory. The whole must be rendered to Christ, by whom, and through whom, all have been given. As the inhabitants of heaven cast their crowns at His feet, and ascribe to Him all the majesty, dominion, power, thanks, and glory, so must we on earth. Not only so; but the excellencies and happiness themselves must not be valued above Christ. Though these be precious, He must be *more* precious; though these be held with great firmness, He must be held with greater firmness; though these be sweet and lovely, He must be more sweet and lovely. These are the works of Christ within us; and the works must not be esteemed better than the Workman. As the Fountain, the Giver, and the Sustainer of all, let us give Him all the pre-eminence and all the glory.

JEHOVAH-JIREH.

Whatever may be the difficulties in which you are placed, there is no doubt but God will interpose to provide, if you do but place your humble and prayerful trust in Him.

He is as faithful to His people now as He was when He provided for Abraham on Mount Moriah, or for Elijah by the brook Kedron, or for Daniel in the lions' den, or for Paul in shipwreck on the Adriatic. Is not the history of God's people, since the Bible has been sealed, full of reliable instances of God providing for them in *temporal* straits as well as in spiritual? Dr. Krummacher makes mention of one case in his work on Elijah:—"Who else," he asks, "was it but the God of Elijah, who, only a short time ago, so kindly delivered a poor man out of his distress, not, indeed, by a raven, but by a poor singing bird? The man was sitting early in the morning at his house door; his eyes were red with weeping, and his heart cried to heaven, for he was expecting an officer to come and distrain him for a small debt. Whilst sitting thus with a heavy heart, a little bird flew over his head into the cottage, and perched itself within an empty cupboard. The poor man closed the door, caught the bird, and placed it in a cage, where it began to sing very sweetly, and it seemed to the man as if it were the tune of a favourite hymn, 'Fear thou not when darkness reigns;' and as he listened to it, he found it soothe and comfort his mind. Suddenly some one knocked at the door; but instead of the officer, whom the poor man so much dreaded, it was the servant of a respectable lady, who said that the neighbours had seen a bird fly into his house, and wished to know if he had caught it. 'O yes,' replied the man; 'here it is;' and the bird was carried away. A few minutes after, she came back and said, 'You have done my mistress a great service; she sets a high value upon the bird that had escaped. She is much obliged to you, and requests you to accept this trifle, with her thanks.' The poor man received it thankfully, and it proved to be neither more nor less than the sum he owed!" This poor man's God was the God of Elijah, and He is *your* God.

PROMISES OF THE SPIRIT.

That Spirit whom you desire, and without whom you feel

there can be no good wrought in you, is the promise of God your Father. He gives Him, according to His promise, to every one that asks. Listen to His own words:—

“Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, and I will make known my words unto you” (Prov. i, 23).

“And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezek. xxxvi, 27).

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” (Luke xi, 13).

“He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive” (John vii, 38, 39).

“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever. Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John xiv, 16, 17).

**BELIEVE THE WORD OF THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART,
AND NOW ASK AND RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST.**

“Lord, we believe to us and ours
The apostolic promise given;
We wait the Pentecostal powers,
The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.
If every one that asks may find,
If still Thou dost on sinners fall;
Come as a mighty rushing wind—
Great grace be now upon us all.”

SELF-DENIAL.

By self-denial I mean the soul's quitting all its own interest in itself, and an entire resignation of itself to Him as to all points of service and duty; and thus the soul loves itself in

God, and lives in the possession, not so much of its own being as of the Divinity; desiring only to be great in God, to glory in His light, and spread itself in His fulness; to be filled always by Him, and to empty itself again into Him; to receive all from Him, and to expend all for Him; and so to live not as its own, but as God's. The highest ambition of a good man is to serve the will of God; he takes no pleasure in himself, nor in anything within himself, further than he sees a stamp of God upon it. Whereas wicked men are imprisoned within the narrow circumference of their own beings, and perpetually frozen into a cold self-love, which binds up all the innate vigour of their souls, that it cannot break forth or express itself in any noble way. The soul in which religion rules, on the contrary, says as St. Paul, "I live; and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." A wicked man swells in his own thoughts, and pleaseth himself more or less with the imagination of his self-sufficiency. The Stoics, seeing they could not raise themselves up to God, endeavoured to bring down God to their own model, imagining the Deity to be nothing else but some greater kind of animal, and a wise man to be almost one of His peers. And this is more or less the genius of wicked men; they will be something in themselves, they wrap up themselves in their own being, move up and down in a sphere of self-love, live a professed independency of God, and maintain a *meum et tuum* between God and themselves. It is the character of a good man to be able to deny and disown himself, and to make a full surrender of himself to God, forgetting himself and minding nothing but the will of his Creator; triumphing in nothing more than in his own nothingness, and in the allness of the Divinity. But indeed this, his being nothing, is the only way to be all things; this, his having nothing, the truest way of possessing all things.—*John Smith.*

EXPECTING TRIALS.

It will be well for you, my brother, to expect trials in the

Divine life. Do not imagine that it will always be sunshine and calm. You may now have ecstasy, but soon you may have depression. The brightest mornings sometimes turn out the stormiest noons. The sun may rise cloudless, but soon be overshadowed with blackness as of night. The ocean now lying without a ripple may soon rage beneath the fury of a mighty tempest. Things that are most precious to us may be suddenly lost by us, and our fairest hopes be blighted in the bud.

You are reminded of these things, not to discourage you, but to caution you; to make you like the sailor, who, expecting gales and tempests, makes provision for them beforehand. Keep your eye on Jesus, your hand on His promise, your feet in His ways, your heart in His love, and you shall be prepared for every contingency of life. You may not always have equality of joyousness; but you shall have an equality of safety.

PATIENCE.

In the midst of the trying and perplexing things of life you have need of patience. It should be to you the safeguard of the soul. "In patience," says Jesus, "possess your souls." As though He had said, "Let patience be the castle, the fortification, in which your soul shall be preserved from care, distress, and seizure, by your enemies. "Patience," says Bishop Hopkins, "is the ballast of the soul, that will keep it from rolling and tumbling in the greatest storms; and he that will venture out without this to make him sail even and steady, will certainly make shipwreck and drown himself, first in the cares and sorrows of this world, and then in perdition." "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promise."

ACKNOWLEDGING GOD IN ALL THINGS.

It was a very prominent feature in the piety of the Scripture saints to acknowledge God in all things. Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Daniel, Paul, Peter, &c., did so most expressly. They saw Him in the small as well as the great things of life; in the judgments as well as the blessings of life; in the operations of nature as in the revelations of truth; and in all these they acknowledged Him with a confidence, a fulness, a fidelity, which did Him honour before the world, and evidenced their devotedness to His cause. Surely there are as many reasons for us acknowledging Him as there were for them. Have we not as many blessings, and therefore as many obligations? Is He not as manifestly in nature, providence, grace, and the Scriptures, now as He was then? David saw God in the sun, moon, and stars, and made a record of it. Cannot we do the same? He saw Him in the affliction of his person, in the death of his child, in the judgments of his kingdom, in the forgiveness of his sins: and did he not confess God in these things? Abraham saw God in his leaving Ur, on his journey, in Canaan, on Moriah, at Mamre, &c.; and how exact he is in the acknowledgment. Daniel saw God in his captivity in Babylon, in the lions' den, &c.; and so he acknowledges Him. Jesus saw God noticing sparrows fall to the ground, numbering the hairs of our heads, clothing the fields with grass, giving beauty to the lily, feeding the raven, &c.; and how loudly He acknowledges Him! My brother, if you open your eyes of faith, will not you also see God, in things equally small and great; in the life of nature, of providence, and of grace, particularly as this threefold life operates in relation to your own personal experience? And if you see Him, why hesitate to say so? Throw off all reserve on this point. Let your tongue and actions be as loud in proclaiming Him in your time and position as were the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles in theirs. Surely He is a God whom you need not

be ashamed to acknowledge, even with the voice of an archangel, if you had it.

LIVING NEAR TO GOD.

If we live to God at all, we ought to live near to Him, and as near as it is possible for a worm to approach its Maker. However near we may go to Him He will not repulse or drive us away, as acting a part that is highly presumptuous. In Jesus Christ as our Saviour, He invites, He woos, He entreats us to go to Him. With the blood of the Lamb sprinkled upon us, and the righteousness of our Lord clothing us, we may have nearness of access into the holiest where He dwells, between the cherubim over the mercy-seat; we may converse with Him, have fellowship with Him, call Him "Father," and hear the gracious response, "My children." We may dwell in the light, as He is in light; be holy, as He is holy: we may go so near as to see His eye looking upon us in love, behold His countenance beaming upon us in favour; feel His hand resting upon us in blessings; feel the pulsations of His heart in sympathy: more than all this, we may be made partakers of His nature, and have Him dwelling in us and we in Him. "If a man love me," says the Saviour, "he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto Him, and make our ABODE with him." The Father Himself says, "I will DWELL in them, and WALK in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

We may, then, live near, very near to God, through Christ; nearer than can be realised in any of the life of nature, philosophy, or morality. The nearer we live to God the more we shall see of His beauties, and feel of His love, the more we shall admire His character and confide in His administrations, the more we shall rise above sin and long after the unveiled glories of His nature in heaven. *Near to God*, brother, is our heaven on earth. Oh, to feel the living motives urging us to Him, and the mighty attractions drawing us!

ASPIRATION AFTER CHRIST.

Thou Shepherd of Israel, and mine,
 The joy and desire of my heart;
 For closer communion I pine,
 I long to reside where Thou art;
 The pasture I languish to find,
 Where all who their Shepherd obey,
 Are fed, on Thy bosom reclined,
 And screen'd from the heat of the day.
 Ah! show me that happiest place,
 The place of Thy people's abode,
 Where saints in an ecstasy gaze,
 And hang on a crucified God:
 Thy love for a sinner declare,
 Thy passion and death on the tree;
 My spirit to Calvary bear,
 To suffer and triumph with Thee.
 'Tis there with the lambs of Thy flock,
 There only, I covet to rest,
 To lie at the foot of the rock,
 Or rise to be hid in Thy breast:
 'Tis there I would always abide,
 And never a moment depart;
 Conceal'd in the cleft of Thy side,
 Eternally held in Thy heart.

C. Wesley.

CHAPTER VIII.

(Eighth Meeting.)

A FITFUL RELIGION.

LET your religion be free from all those fits and starts which
 characterise the feelings of some people; who have as many
 changes and as much uncertainty as the chameleon, as the
 wind, as the weather, as the water. A religion so unstable

cannot be relied upon either by yourself or by any one around you. No one can tell when to find you happy, peaceful, strong, or useful. When it is thought you are in one place or state you may be in the very opposite extreme; when the minister relies upon you for a faithful testimony or an earnest effort, you may blight his expectation, and do him less helping service than he required. No abstract feeling of the body, no abstract circumstance of life, no floating sentiments of men, should be the criteria of your religious life. Despite all the changes of body, of circumstances, of creeds, of friends, you should remain the same faithful, steady, regular, devoted follower of Jesus Christ. Mark the equality, the evenness, the meekness, the stability of His religious life. Let your religion not be as the clouds of the sky, ever changing in bulk, colour, influences, and benefits; but rather like the sun, going forth in his daily course, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Attend to the exhortations of the Holy Ghost upon firmness and evenness in religion:—"Therefore be ye STEADFAST, IMMOVEABLE, always abounding in the work of the Lord." "STAND FAST in the faith; quit you like men; be strong."

PRAYING WITHOUT ANSWERS.

If you have indeed prayed, and received no answers, it behoves you to ask most faithfully, What is the reason? Without any hesitancy, I suppose, you would say that the reason does not exist in God, or in any of those arrangements which He has made in the economy of grace for answers to be given to prayers. The reason, then, must exist in you, or in your prayers, or in both. The ancient Jews often prayed to God, but received no returns. The reason was found in their sins, which they loved. St. James, in accounting for some Christians in his day not having answers to their prayers, says unto them, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." How far are these words applicable to you, my brother? If you have not asked with a view to *abuse* the blessings you should

receive, you may have asked amiss in some other respects. Have you tried to do with as little prayer as possible, seeking rather to please conscience and to adhere to the form, than to glorify God and obtain good from Him? Have your prayers been cold, selfish, doubtful, unbelieving? Has an unforgiving spirit rankled in your bosom in prayer, towards one who had confessed his fault and asked forgiveness? When you have prayed, have you lost sight of Jesus as the Mediator, and the Spirit as the Agent, by whom, and through whom, you have access to God? Have you been satisfied with the mere form, —words, kneeling, prostration, &c.—not coveting and exercising, as best you could, the *power*? If these things have characterised your prayers, no wonder you have not received any answers. To expect answers to such prayers were the highest presumption!—were an insult to God!—were a positive contradiction to the Scriptures! Do you expect an answer from man, when your request is presented in a way contrary to his character, his stated method; contrary to your character and the things you request? Why, then, should you be surprised that God has not answered your prayers, if offered *amiss*?

BELIEVERS THE BRETHREN OF CHRIST.

Such honour have not the angels in heaven as to be called the “brethren” of the ever adorable Saviour. This belongs exclusively to those who believe in His name, and do His will. “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my BROTHER, and sister, and mother” (Matt. xii, 50). Although there is so much unfaithfulness and sin within us by nature, He does not disown the relationship between Himself and us, because by grace we are made partakers of His holiness: “Both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them BRETHREN” (Heb. ii, 11). As His brethren, He feels deep love for us: He exercises great sympathy towards us.

"Yes! for me, for me, He careth,
With a brother's tender care;
Yes! with me, with me, He beareth
Every burden, every fear."

FIGHTING WITH SATAN.

To fight with Satan in your own strength is like a babe fighting with a giant. Your own resolutions, morality, devotions, education, shall all fly in cowardice before him. He is too strong for *your* strength; too cunning for *your* wisdom; too vigilant for *your* watchfulness. Peter thought Satan should never have any power over *him*; but he was self-deceived. The enemy no sooner made his assault, than he found an entrance. Of this he took advantage, set up his throne within him, and reigned as king. The only way to fight with Satan is to "*put on the whole armour of God*," and make free use of the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, which is the Word of God. "IT IS WRITTEN," is the two-edged sword which cuts both ways, and against which the arch-fiend is sure to cower and fly. It was with this the Captain of our salvation vanquished the devil in the wilderness. With the same *you* may contend with him, and come off more than conqueror.

A MARK OF PERFECTION IN LOVE.

A will entirely accordant with, and lost in the will of God, is a mark of itself sufficient to show that our love is perfect. This may be illustrated by a reference to filial love as it sometimes shows itself in a family. Take, in the first place, the case of a child who, while he is attached to his father, manifests what is called a "will of his own." It would be wrong to say that he does not love his father at all, although he does not always do with prompt readiness and manifest pleasure what his father wishes. He sometimes hesitates, asks for reasons, or tries to have it imposed on some one else. He has purposes of his own which he would fain attend to; and if his father's plans cross his, he may exhibit a disposition to

rebel, and "set up for himself." And when he *does* obey, it may be with a degree of reluctance, not with the full consent of his will. Even with these features in the child's obedience, were you to ask him whether he loved his father, he would emphatically answer "yes." But his love is *not perfect*. Take, in the next place, a child whose happiness is to see his father happy; whose joy is to anticipate his father's commands; whose will is by a sort of instinctive tendency united, and blended with his father's will, so that the least opposition or contrariety between the two will give him great pain. In the case of this child, you would not hesitate to say that his love was perfect. He so loves his father that he has no will but agrees with his will; and no obedience but is in conformity to the father's requirements. His study and endeavour are in *all things* to do that which will please him. When our wills are thus conformed to the will of God, and lives thus regulated by His commandments, then is our love perfect. It was one of the sayings of Francis Xavier, that "the perfection of the creature consists in willing nothing but the will of the Creator."

NOT SATISFIED WITH PRESENT ATTAINMENTS.

If the true spirit of religion is possessed by you, there will be a constant aspiration after a deeper work of grace in the soul. This was the case with the Psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee." So it was with the apostle Paul: "This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, I press towards the things which are before." The Saviour did not rest at any one point of his sojourn until He reached the highest place in the scale of human redemption. The precepts, admonitions, and exhortations of Scripture, as well as the examples, present your obligation to progress in the Divine life. As the babe does not keep a babe, but passes on to a man complete, so you should pass on from a babe in Christ "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." As

the merchant is not satisfied with the gains of the first year, but goes on in the accumulation of gains until he acquires a fortune, so you should increase in the profits of religion until you are possessed of the fulness of the riches of grace. As the racer is not satisfied with a few paces in the course, but runs to the goal, so you should so run that you may obtain the prize. David declared, "*Then shall I be satisfied when I awake up in Thy likeness.*" While there is any lineament of the world or Satan upon you, do not be satisfied. While you are this side the pearly gates of the city of God, do not rest where you are. Tarry not in the race, cease not in the work, stop not in the ascent, until the Master appears and says, "It is enough."

"Then when the mighty work is wrought
Receive Thy ready bride;
Give us in heaven a happy lot
With all the sanctified."

BEARING FRUIT.

As trees of the Lord's right hand planting in His vineyard, He expects us to bring forth fruit. As branches on Christ, the Vine, He expects us to bring forth fruit. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear *MUCH* fruit, so shall ye be my disciples." Not only does He look for fruit, but He looks for *good* fruit, and also for *much* fruit. Has He not a just right to expect *much good fruit*? A gardener is not satisfied that he simply has fruit from the trees of his garden: he is only pleased and satisfied when he has fruit in proportion to the age and nature of the trees, the soil in which they grow, the good position in which they stand, the expense and labour which they have cost him. So it is with the great Master of the vineyard of which we are trees. Considering our grafting into Him and consequent union with Him; our means and ordinances of religion; our helps from above and around; the immense care, love, mercy, patience He has bestowed upon us; the dews of

grace, showers of blessings, light and heat from the Sun of Righteousness; the pruning, the watching, the guarding, we have had,—has He not a right to expect *much* fruit? How can we think that a little will glorify Him?

And what is the fruit He looks for?—Presching? Praying? Fasting? Almsgiving? Monastic living? Ritualism? Ceremonies? Verily not! What many estimate as fruit He casts from Him as wild grapes. The fruit of the Spirit, which grows in and upon them who are trees of the Lord, is “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal. v, 22, 23). **THIS IS THE FRUIT WHICH THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD EXPECTS, AND WHICH WE SHOULD YIELD TO HIM.**

VISITING THE SICK.

Whenever you have the opportunity avail yourself of the privilege of visiting your fellow Christians in their sickness. They take it as a kindness and reap comfort; while you shall learn the value of religion in such circumstances, and be incited to a more earnest effort of life to prepare for the same. Do not imagine that this is a work exclusively for the minister. It is an evidence of the reality of your religion. A little girl, who used to read the Bible to a poor sick woman who could not read herself, was asked by a gentleman in the Sabbath school at which she attended, why she visited this woman? “Because, sir,” said she, “I find it said in the Bible, ‘Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.’”

FEARS IN OLD AGE.

Why indulge in fears now your conflicts are nearly past, and the crown is in view? He will never leave you to perish in the end. Has He been so long time with you and bestowed such numberless blessings upon you, and can you not trust Him for a few more days or months of sojourn? May you not apply to yourself the language with which Manoah was comforted by

his wife, when, having been visited by the Angel of Jehovah, he feared they would be destroyed? "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things." O think of the great sins He has pardoned for you; the great deliverances He has wrought out for you; the great tokens of love He has given you. Think of the favours which *now* abide upon your person, your family, your prospects; and as these mercies rise before you, try to sing—

"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to bring me quite through."

OVERTAKEN IN A FAULT.

It would be scarcely possible to find any one of us but has his failing of some kind. This failing has its times of active life and power, when it comes forth against us as though it would conquer and lead us captive. Though in the main we may resist and keep it in subjection, yet are there not seasons when through unwatchfulness, neglect of duty, or some other cause, we are overtaken with it, and involved in its power? If the fault with which you are overtaken is such as clings to your inner nature, and is known only to God and yourself, then it behoves you specially to confess the matter to Him, and seek His merciful sympathy and forgiving grace. So far as it may be profitable to you, beneficial to your Christian brethren, and glorifying to God, you may refer to it in the confession of your experience before the church. But if your fault is a public one,—one that affects the consistency of your life in society, and consequently the honour of Christ in the purity of His religion,—and you have been overtaken in *this*, it is necessary that you not only confess it in private to God, but in public before the church. The offence is public,

the confession should be public, *before the church*, as far as practicable. Two advantages to yourself will be received by this conduct,—*First*, you will receive the sympathy of the church according to St. Paul's direction: "Brethren, if any one of you be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." *Secondly*, you will receive the prayers of the church for your recovery: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." If, then, as a member of the church, you are overtaken in any fault which clings to you, do not let the sore created lie unhealed within you. By the sympathy of Jesus, and the sympathy of His people, seek a prompt and effectual restoration to spiritual health and strength.

THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH.

Just before our blessed Lord entered into the "holiest of all," there to appear in the presence of God for us, He said, "I will pray the Father for you, and He shall send you another Comforter, that he may ABIDE WITH YOU FOR EVER." In answer to His mighty intercession the Comforter has come; and He is now dwelling in the Church of Christ. This *ever-abiding* presence of the Spirit in the Church is an absolute necessity—as much as the presence of the spirit of life to the body. Let the vital power forsake the body, and it dies; so, in the absence of the Comforter, the Church expires in all the elements which constitute it a *living Church of Christ*. "With the exception of the miracles, there was nothing in the plentiful effusions of the day of Pentecost which every Christian does not daily need, and which every Christian church must continually have, or languish. Christians have the witness in themselves that the influences of the Holy Spirit are abiding and permanent in the Church. Of this they are as sure as that physical influences are permanent in the creation. In the health of the body, in the nutriment of food, and in the production of harvests, every man has the witness in himself, that what-

ever influence was contained in the early promise of "summer and winter, seed-time and harvest," is still abiding and continuing in the world. The Christian has a corresponding witness in himself. He feels in himself his own insufficiency to produce, of himself, the effects accomplished by the Gospel. His own comforts, and hopes, and joys, and supports, are what, without the Gospel, the world could not give him; and what, with the Gospel, the world cannot take away. These are effected in the Christian, not by the intellectual clearness and moral force of the arguments in the Gospel, but by the influences of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel. Every such consolation is an instance, and a standing testimony, that the "other Comforter" is come, and "abides with us for ever."

O for the *manifestation* of this Spirit in the Church, in greater powers OF CONVERSION, HOLINESS, UNITY, EXPANSION, AND TRIUMPHS!

GENTLY, LORD !

Gently, ah ! gently, Lord ! for Thou art strong—
Strong with Infinitude—and I am frail ;

O let my want avail !

Deal with me gently ! leave me not among
Sin's wild weird shadows, of my soul abhorred—
Gently, ah gently, Lord !

And yet I ask not joy should be allowed
To build rare sun-bows o'er my saddened head,
From tears I long have shed :
Sunlight would dazzle one so used to cloud
And sea-spray. Give but footing while I ford !
Gently, ah gently, Lord !

Life hath no pain, Thy presence will not cheer :
But Thy felt presence fades too oft in pain :
And pale hands feebly strain
To clasp Thy robe, when only cloud seems near—
The cloud of judgment, cold as death-fraught sword—
Gently, ah gently, Lord !

For in Thy frown is horror. Fiends withdraw
When Thou art smiling; but with' endless file
Close in when fades Thy smile,
Oh Shield of Israel! let Thy kindness awe
My soul from sinning; hear my sighs long poured—
Gently, ah gently, Lord!

I know Thy ways are right, but I am blind,
And faint with year-long groping. One sure touch
Of Thine, would heal so much
Of doubt and sorrow which no balsam find
Save of Thy blending. Then relief afford—
Gently, ah gently, Lord ;

Send Peace or Patience! Patience to believe,
Though Peace be hidden, till Death's opening hinge
 Bid her clear rose-lamp tinge
The Bridegroom's vesture; while glad angels weave
Crowns for the comers to His festal board—
 Gently, ah gently, Lord! *Anon.*

CHAPTER IX.

(Ninth Meeting.)

THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

In proportion as we hate sin we shall desire the manifestation of God's presence unto us ; and in proportion as sin is destroyed from within us, we shall realise and enjoy His manifestation. Adam in his primeval innocence delighted in the presence of his Maker, but with the loss of his innocence he hid himself from his God. Abel in his righteousness, obtained by faith, rejoiced to approach God and present his offering. Enoch, in his purity, walked with God, and was not, for God took him. David in his sin mourned an absent God, but in the enjoyment of pardon, he rejoiced in Him all the day long. The biographies of good men bear testimony to the access they had to Him, and the manifestation which He made of Himself

unto them. We read of Payson, that his mind at times almost lost its sense of the external world in the ineffable thoughts of God's glory, which rolled like a sea of light around him at the throne of grace. We read of Cowper that, in one of the few lucid hours of his religious life, such was the experience of God's presence which he enjoyed in prayer, that, as he tells us, he thought he should have died with joy, if special strength had not been imparted to him to bear the disclosure. We read of one of the Tennents, that on one occasion, when he was engaged in secret devotion, so overpowering was the revelation of God which opened upon his soul, and with augmenting intensity of effulgence as he prayed, that at length he recoiled from the intolerable joy as from a pain, and besought God to withhold from him further manifestations of His glory. He said, "Shall Thy servant *see* Thee and live?" We read of the "sweet hours" which Edwards enjoyed "on the banks of Hudson's river, in secret converse with God," and hear his own description of the inward sense of Christ which at times came into his heart, and which he "knows not how to express otherwise than by a calm, sweet abstraction of soul from all the concerns of this world; and sometimes a kind of vision of being alone in the mountains, or some solitary wilderness, far from all mankind, sweetly conversing with Christ, and rapt and swallowed up in God."

TRUSTING GOD FOR SMALL THINGS.

We are too much like children who cry and make a great ado about sweet-meats and toys, while they can trust for clothing, general care, and a house in which to live. How many of what may be called the small things of this life and of religion we are anxious about, while the great concerns we leave with God. Now, why can we not commit ourselves into His hands for the small as well as the great? Let us not forget that He rules the atom as well as the world, that He feeds the humming bird as well as the eagle, that He provides the crust as well as the feast, that He numbers the hairs of your head as

well as the stars of the firmament. Shall He uphold all things and not uphold you? Shall He clothe the lilies and feed the ravens and not clothe and feed you, O ye of little faith? As a Christian, God has made over to you a *crown*, that fadeth not away; and can you not trust Him for a *crumb* which perishes? Has He clothed you with the garment of salvation, and will you not trust Him for the clothing of the body? He has provided a house for you in the heavens, which hath foundation, whose Builder and Maker is God; and will you not trust Him for a tabernacle, or a cottage in the wilderness? Has He given you Himself, His Son, His Spirit, His Word, His grace, His promises; and can you not trust Him to give you bread, friends, clothes, habitation, and all the necessary mercies of this life? Surely, if He has given you the greater He will give you the less. This is the very argument of St. Paul: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things."

"Be careful for NOTHING; but in EVERYTHING by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv, 6). "I would have you without carefulness" (1 Cor. vii, 32). "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee" (Ps. lv, 5, 22). "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. vi, 30).

ALL FOR THE BEST.

What a relief it is to the various trials of life when we can think, "it is all for the best." How it fringes the darkest cloud with streaks of beauteous light! What a large portion of sweetness it drops into the bitterest draught we have to drink. In the time of the deepest sorrow, and when the heart is bleeding under the sharpest strokes of the judging angel's sword, it puts vigour into our hope, and spirit into our faith. It weakens our doubts and strengthens our confidence. It hushes our complainings and promotes our resignation. It

raises our approval of the wisdom of the Divine administrations in providence, and cherishes a sense of our absolute dependence upon Him in all things. Jacob, when he looked at the dark side of God's dealings with him, pronounced, "All these things make against me;" but Job, when in the deepest distresses that ever afflicted a mortal man, saw that all was for the best, exclaimed in the resignation and trust of his spirit, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" St. Paul learned to great perfection the lesson of looking at all things as being for the best; and therefore he could "rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks." He could lay it down as a settled truth, "All things work together for good." Dr. Johnson used to say that a habit of looking at the best side of every event is better than a thousand pounds a year. Good Bishop Hall very quaintly remarks, "For every bad there might be a worse: and when a man breaks his leg let him be thankful that it was not his neck." When Fenelon's library was on fire, "God be praised," he exclaimed, "that it is not the dwelling of some poor man." Endeavour, Christian, if you have not, to acquire this habit. Remember, however much you look at the dark side of things, you cannot thereby make them better. It is enough that the things be dark in themselves, without having darkness in your mind. Carry light within, and reflect it upon *them*. If there is a bright spot, find it; if there is not one, make one. Do not walk among thistles if beds of violets are spread before you.

FAITH ASLEEP AND AWAKE.

Faith is given you by God to be wakeful and active, just as life is. If you sleep in your faith, there is no difference between you and others. A bee would perish in the midst of flowery meadows if it was still and inactive; so would the Christian in the midst of the richest Gospel blessings, if his faith slept in indolence. Samson, sleeping in the lap of Delilah, is as helpless as any other man; but when he awakes out of his

sleep, and breaks the withs and cords that bind him, carrying away the beam and the web with which he is fastened, then his strength appears in its greatness and matchlessness. So when the Christian's faith is asleep, he is the same as other men; but when astir and active, looking to Jesus, to the promises, to duty, then he stands forth as a giant for God, bearing burdens under which the other would sink; enduring temptations before which the other would fall; making him joyful in hours when the other would be sorrowful; victorious when the other would be a captive; and giving him an abundant entrance into heaven when the other would be cast into the fires which never shall be quenched!

THE BELIEVER A SERVANT OF CHRIST.

In your unconverted state you were the servant of Satan, doing his work with earnestness and pleasure; but in your conversion, you cast off his yoke and forsook his employ. Being made free from sin, you became a servant to God. And the result of your work is holiness and everlasting life (Rom. vi, 22).

Let your service to Christ be constant and sincere. All that He has done for you He has done with infinite sincerity: "Whatsoever ye do do it heartily as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. iii, 23 24).

After you have done all you can, there will be no merit in you. "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke xvii, 10).

Your service for Christ shall be followed with payment—"If any man serve me let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John xii, 26).

THE GLORY OF HOLINESS.

This is the highest glory of the universe. It is a glory with

which Deity is clothed. It is His chief glory. In all the manifestations of Himself, He has kept this most prominent. In the creation of man He made it first. Moses celebrated it on the deliverance from the Red Sea. It was set forth in the unapproachable light in which He appeared to Moses. It was symbolised by the Shekinah in the holy of holies. It was proclaimed to Isaiah when the seraphim cried one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of Thy glory." It was represented to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration by the face of Jesus, which "did shine as the sun," and by His raiment, which was "white as the light."

When we are partakers of this holiness we are also partakers of the glory. As a ray of light shining upon an object, from the sun, brings with it not only a degree of light, but also of glory, so the holiness of the Lord, in the measure in which we receive it, brings with it a proportionate measure of its glory; and as the light and glory of the sun exceed the light and glory of all lights and glories, so the holiness of God and its glory. This glory will exceed the glory of all worldly knowledge, wealth, honour, and power. As the glory of light fills the hemisphere when the sun shines, so the glory of holiness

"fill the whole sphere of your life in which it shines.

"Holy as Thou, O Lord, is none;
Thy holiness is all Thine own;
A drop of that unbounded sea
Is ours,—a drop derived from Thee.

And when Thy purity we share,
Thine only glory we declare;
And, humbled into nothing, own
Holy and pure is God alone."

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

If the Scriptures place Jesus Christ, in the pre-eminence between God and us, as the medium through which all com-

munications are made from us to Him, and from Him to us, is it possible for us to err in doing the same? Shall we for a moment think of superseding Him by anything of our own, or anything of any other being? God forbid. "He is," as one says, "the first matter, as it were, out of which God hath framed all good. He is the receptacle in which all blessings are laid up, and the well-head from whence they all flow. By His blood the promises are purchased for us, and by His most powerful intercession they are made good to us. Alas! how little efficacy would all our prayers have, if they were not presented to God the Father by His hand? How small acceptance would our persons find, if God did not look upon us in Him? How uncertain would all our comforts be, if the root of them were not in Him—if He were not as the tree of life upon which they grow? yea, how quickly should we spy a hell that might amaze us between heaven and any other ground of confidence that could possibly be imagined by us out of Christ. When, therefore, we do at any time make a thankful recognition of God's goodness to us in the particular mercies of the Gospel, let us be sure to attach the name of Christ to all; when we bless God for blotting out our iniquities, for pardoning freely all our sins, let us set this crown upon the head of the mercy, that He hath done it in Christ. When we bless Him for sanctifying us, let us ever add, for His sanctifying us in Christ. When we praise Him for our adoption and sonship, let us bless Him for doing it in Christ. When we honour Him for the assured hopes of life and glory in heaven, let us say as the apostle doth, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places IN CHRIST," (Eph. i, 3).

CLOSET DEVOTION.

The Saviour's religion, as exemplified by Himself in His teachings and example, is not only a religion enjoining duties for public, but for private also. We are not only to meet in company for prayer, praise, hearing the Word, mutual exhorta-

tion and confession, but we are, as *individuals*, to enter our *closets*, and pray to God in secret. Our Exemplar did this. We cannot forget His retirement in the wilderness; His rising "a great while before day" and going into a private place for prayer; His going into the mountain apart from His disciples; His secret devotion in the garden. David, the man after God's own heart, went alone to meditate, and to muse on the works of his God. On his bed he praised God with joyful lips, and in the night watches he meditated upon Him. It was in his closet devotions that David breathed out those profound aspirations after Jéhovah, and uttered those sweet and lofty songs of Divine praise, which the formalist cannot comprehend, and which render the Book of Psalms such a choice companion to all the devout and holy. "I would not," says Mrs. Berry, in her Diary, "be hired out of my closet for a thousand worlds. I never enjoy such hours of pleasure, and such free and entire communion with God as I have here."

However *men* may measure our piety, there is no doubt God measures it by our *closet devotion*. Do we love to pray when no eye sees us and no ear hears us but the eye and ear of Him who seeth in secret? Do we love to read the Scriptures and think upon them when we are alone? Do we love to examine ourselves in the solitude of our closets? In our private hours of rest or of toil, does the mind take pleasure in meditating upon God, Christ, grace, heaven, &c.? If we have a love to these and other parts of closet devotion, we contain evidence of piety far better than if we possessed all the Pharisaical signs of public devotion, and were wanting in these. While, therefore, we do not *neglect* the public, let us be most diligent in the use of *closet devotion*.

THE INDULGENCE OF ONE SIN.

If we give up all sins but one, and continue to indulge in that it will be enough to hold us in condemnation before God, to keep us out of the enjoyment of experimental religion, and ultimately to exclude us from the kingdom of heaven

One leak sinks the ship; one Delilah ruins Samson; one broken wheel stops the machine; one wound in the heart lets out the life; one fly spoils the whole box of ointment; one Adam brings sin into the world; one taste of honey endangers Jonathan's life; one Achan brings trouble upon Israel; so one sin loved, indulged, unrepented of and unforsaken, effects the destruction of the soul. Away, then, away with the accursed thing! Pluck it out; cut it off; cast it from thee. It is death to thee! however beautiful, precious, profitable. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." (Matt. v, 29. 30.)

THE EYE OF THE WORLD.

You need not be discouraged because the world looks at you to detect your errors, and to rejoice in your failings. Rather regard it as a wise permission of your Father to act as a safeguard, keeping you alive to the necessity of consistency and stability, making you watchful over those mistakes and weaknesses in your life at which the world may more particularly look. Oh, it is a good thing the eye of the world is upon you! Do not lose sight of this fact. So live that it shall see in you the light of the Christian, the beauties of holiness, the glory of the Redeemer. Condemn the world by your righteousness.

"Thus stop the mouth of every foe,
And show them how the Christians live."

BEARING THE CROSS.

To bear the cross as a Christian is to do right *always*; is to obey the Saviour's commandments under all circumstances. It is to deny, conquer, and control *self*. It is to watch, pray,

meditate, and have fellowship with Christ. It is to glorify God before men in a holy walk and conversation, although it may bring reproach and persecution. It is to forgive enemies, to love all men, and to do good to their bodies and souls according to our abilities. In a word, it is to follow Jesus through evil report or good report, to deny ourselves of all ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. Paul took up his cross and bore it, when he said, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Peter laid down his cross when, in the company of the ungodly, he exclaimed, "I know not the Man."

Jesus, our blessed Saviour, bore the cross for us—a cross such as would have crushed all the angels together; and surely we ought to bear one for Him. This is our duty, and our privilege, too. The apostles rejoiced in being counted worthy to suffer shame for Him. Let us, then, not be ashamed to carry our cross wherever we go—in the shop, in the street, in the market, in the field, in the family. It may sometimes be a heavy one, pressing hard upon us; but we shall not sink. He who walked up the rugged ascent of Calvary, and conquered with the cross, is by our side, comforting and strengthening us. Let us look up and forward. There, in the heavens, is the crown waiting to deck our brow, with a glory infinitely beyond the suffering which the cross inflicts upon our shoulders. The Roman criminal was wont to carry his cross and be crucified upon it; but the Christian carries his cross to heaven, and is glorified with it for ever. So it was with Stephen and Paul. From the martyrdom of the cross they went—one to the presence of his Lord, the other to the crown of righteousness; both to the "RECOMPENSE OF REWARD."

THE TRAVELLER TO ZION.

Haste, traveller, haste! the night comes on,
And many a shining hour is gone;

The storm is gathering in the west,
 And thou not far from home and rest ;
 Haste, traveller, haste !

Awake, awake ! pursue thy way
 With steady course, while yet 'tis day ;
 While thou art sleeping on the ground,
 Danger and darkness gather round ;
 Haste, traveller, haste !

The rising tempest sweeps the sky ;
 The rains descend, the winds are high ;
 The waters swell, and death and fear
 Beset thy path, nor refuge near ;
 Haste, traveller, haste !

O yes ! a shelter you may gain,
 A covert from the wind and rain,
 A hiding-place, a rest, a home,
 A refuge from the wrath to come ;
 Haste, traveller, haste !

Then linger not in all the plain,
 Flee for thy life, the mountain gain ;
 Look not behind, make no delay,
 O speed thee, speed thee on thy way ;
 Haste, traveller, haste !

Poor, lost, benighted soul ! art thou
 Willing to find salvation now ?
 There yet is hope ; hear mercy's call ;
 Truth ! Life ! Light ! Way ! in Christ is all !
 Haste to Him, haste !

W. B. Collyer.

“Here we have no continuing city ; we seek one to come.”
 “Now we desire a better country, that is, a heavenly.”

CHAPTER X.

(Tenth Meeting.)

IMPERFECT KNOWLEDGE.

ST. PETER could not understand how it was that his Lord and Master should condescend to wash *his* feet. Jesus said unto him, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." There is no doubt but Peter acquired this knowledge in after life, when his experience under the teachings of the Spirit increased and enlarged; and in the revelations of eternity he gained a *perfect* insight into *that* act of his Lord's, and of all others which He performed towards him. It may be that your God and Saviour brought you into scenes, circumstances, experiences, in the former part of your life, which then were mysteries to you, and excited your surprise if not complaint that He dealt thus with you; but since then, with the increase of spiritual light, and further progress towards heaven, the then existing mystery has dispersed, and you are satisfied that it was *all right*. He may be dealing with you at the present time in a similar way. Suffer him to do thus with you. Submit to His dispensations however apparently strange and unknown to you. "Thou shalt know hereafter." Some future part of your Christian experience will reveal the present to you as the present reveals the past. And thus shall it be through every stage of your journey to heaven. Like a man ascending from a plain up a mountain—every point of rest shall enlarge his vision, and show to him the things which in the previous point he could not see; until he reach the summit, when the entire scene shall lie out in an open, broad, definable panorama before him. *Now* he sees the whole which only he saw in parts before. So you, my Christian brother, when you have climbed to the top of Jacob's ladder, and stand on Mount Zion, you shall look down upon *all* the way in which God has led you, and *all* the things

He has done to you; and see them with a clearness, distinctness, and fulness, that will call forth the loudest admiration of His wisdom, and the strongest expressions of thanks for His love in doing all things so WELL.

OBSERVING THE FAULTS OF OTHERS.

There is no one without some faults; if, therefore, you are *disposed* to see faults you may do nothing else. But this should not be the way of the Christian. You should look for *excellencies* in others, and not defects. There are spots in the sun, but it is by his light that you see, and his light that you admire. There are barren places in nature; but it is the beautiful landscapes and the fruitful fields that command your attention and praise. Let it be so in regard to the character of your fellow-Christians. If they do not come up to your standard; if their moral courage does not answer your expectation; if they are short-coming according to your interpretation of Scripture; if, as you see them through your glass, they are deformed and uncomely, remember that you are a *human* judge, fallible, short-sighted, prejudiced, with failings in yourself. They, perhaps, may judge you as you judge them. If it is right for you to observe their faults and judge them thereby, it is right for them to do the same with you. If you are possessed of any amount of self-knowledge, you would not like to be judged in this way. Do you suppose they do? Looking only at the faults of others is not only injurious to *them*, but to yourself. It produces censoriousness, uncharitableness, unkindness, murmuring, narrow-mindedness; it chills the love of God, creates canker in the soul; the evils are legion. My brother, cease to yield to this temptation; search for what is good in thy fellow-Christians rather than what is evil. Magnify and exhibit *this*, if you can; but the faults *cover* with the hand of charity. Look upon thy brother as thou hopest God thy Father looks upon thee—*commending that which is good, and pardoning that which is evil.*

THE CARES OF THIS LIFE.

Having to do with the things of this life, it is difficult not to be exercised with its cares; but as Christians we should guard against these cares crowding from the mind our trust in God, and creating within us doubts of the goodness of providence, and the truthfulness of the promises. It is when our cares exert *such* an influence upon us, that we do well to read the words of Christ: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink—nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matt vi, 25—34.)

PRAYER IN ALL THINGS.

Do not think it too much to connect prayer with everything with which you have to do. This is required by the Scriptures. "In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving; let your requests be made known unto God." "Pray without ceasing." Though it may seem difficult, it is practicable. Cultivate the spirit of prayer within you. Let it be a principle with you to associate prayer with all things. Keep the heart awake to its importance and advantages. "The mind of man," says Hales, "is a very agile and nimble substance, and it is a wonderful thing to see how many things it will at one moment apply itself unto without confusion. Look but upon the musician;—while he is in his practice he tunes his voice, fingers, his instrument, reads his ditty, makes the note, observes the time,—all these things at one and the same instant,

without any distraction or impediment; thus should men do in case of devotion, and in the common acts of our vocation let prayer bear a part."

MORTIFICATION OF SIN.

If you feel the rising of sin within you, what means do you adopt for its mortification and death? It is with sin as it was with the affliction of the woman in the Gospel,—it defies all means save one, and that is the virtue which goes out of Christ. This is the infallible and unfailing power which mortifies and destroys sin. This virtue is only received by a personal contact with Him. It was when the woman *touched* the hem of His garment that she was made whole; so when you come to Christ, and rest in Him alone, His blood cleanseth you from all sin. Let the BLOOD in its merit constantly exert its influence with you, and sin shall mortify and expire.

"Five persons," says Mr. Brooks, "were studying what were the best means to mortify sin: one said, to meditate on death, the second to meditate on judgment, the third to meditate on the joys of heaven, the fourth to meditate on the torments of hell, the fifth to meditate on THE BLOOD AND SUFFERINGS OF JERUS CHRIST." This is the means of God's appointment.

"There is a fountain fill'd with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose ALL their guilty stains."

CONFLICT OF THE FLESH.

St. Paul, although so eminent in piety, felt the struggling of human nature in its fallen powers, and as a means of conquest he said that he kept his body under. He mortified the deeds of the body. In his epistle to the Galatians he teaches, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot

do the things that ye would." This has been the experience of Christ's people in all ages. It is your experience. The conflict may be severe sometimes, but you never need be conquered. If the Spirit of the Lord Jesus reign in you, He is victorious in His conflict with the flesh. The flesh may rise, challenge, and boast, and make attempt at the subjugation of your soul to its influence, but it shall not gain the ascendancy. It is the effort only of a chained captive—the boasting of an imprisoned foe. Sin shall not *reign* within you. The rising of sin in occasional thoughts, desires, motives, feelings, shall not be regarded as the *dominion* of sin, but only as an effort to obtain dominion; just as the occasional efforts of a rebel host in a country are no proof that the host reigns, but that it wants to gain the crown from the rightful sovereign. Keep, then, these two or three points before you, viz., that the conflict of the flesh while the Spirit dwells in you is no proof of its dominion, but only an effort to gain it; that the flesh, in its conflict with the Spirit to gain the dominion in you, seeks your spiritual and everlasting destruction; that the Spirit, if permitted to have His free exercise, will always maintain His throne, and carry on the war until the flesh is entirely subdued. This conflict, my brother, is for your *LIFE*. Be you a soldier, *with* the Spirit *against* the flesh. "I beseech you," says St. Peter, "as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

GROWTH IN HOLINESS.

Whatever may be your attainments in holiness you may still reach on to higher attainments. It is not like the life of this world, which advances to a certain point and then turns on a course of decline. Holiness is a life which has infinite and eternal dimensions; it is an ascent which rises higher and higher as we climb up its glorious ways.

You grow in holiness, not as a house or machine grows, by accessions from without, but as flowers and trees and men grow, from a *principle of life within*. Trees do not grow by

fastening branches upon them, nor flowers by adding leaves to them, nor men by uniting limbs to them. "Everything that has life grows by a converting process, which transforms the food into means of nourishment and of growth and enlargement." It is thus that you grow in holiness, by converting all the ordinances, institutions, and blessings of the Gospel into the nourishment of holiness. Holiness feeds upon them, and so increases in life and develops in powers.

GLOBIFYING GOD IN AFFLICTION.

Ann Meigh, a poor distressed woman in the parish of Portmoak, when visited by Mr. Erskine, said to him, "Oh, sir, I am just lying here, a poor helpless creature." "Do you think so?" said he. "I think, sir, what is true. If I were away in heaven, I could be of some use to glorify God without sin." "Indeed, Annie," said Mr. Erskine, "I think you are glorifying God by your resignation and submission to His will, and that in the face of many difficulties and under many distresses. In heaven the children of God have no burdens to groan under; your praises, burdened as you are, are a source of wonder to me, and, I trust, acceptable to God."

GREATER THINGS.

When Nathanael believed in Jesus as Messiah because He told him that He saw him under the fig-tree, Jesus said unto him, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see *greater things* than these." And so Nathanael did. The Samaritan woman believed in Jesus for what He said to her at Jacob's well; but she saw greater things afterwards. The Apostles believed upon the evidences which Christ gave them in His life; but they saw greater things in subsequent years.

You have believed in Jesus for salvation because of some simple statement made to you by the Spirit through some instrumentality employed by Him. But if like Nathanael and the other disciples you remain faithful, you shall see greater things in the future than you see now. Do you

rejoice in the dawn of the day? What will you do when the noontide fulness of light shines upon you? You shall see greater beauty in Christ, greater glory in God, greater preciousness in the promises, greater good in religion, greater benefits in the means of grace, greater charms and satisfaction in holiness, greater attractions and treasures in heaven, greater displays of the power of God in the conquest of sin and Satan, in the conversion of souls and the spread of the Gospel. Just as a child as it advances in years and growth, expands in its capacities and takes in a larger view of things in life, so will you as you grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As a man who has started on a journey sees more and greater things in proportion as he extends his journey and observations, so will you as you travel on through the kingdom of grace to the kingdom of glory. He who ascends a hill from the plain sees greater things beneath, beyond, and around than he saw in the plain itself; so, as you rise in the scale of grace. But you shall also see greater evils in your nature; greater power in Satan, greater vanity in the world, &c. As, however, you progress in those you will attain ascendancy and power over these.

LOVING GOD.

"The love of God must be the love of God's will; for to love God is to love His character, and there is nothing which expresses so much of a person's character as his will—his expressed mind. Do we, then, love God's will or expressed mind under all circumstances and whatever forms it may assume? Do we love it when it prescribes what is difficult to flesh and blood—forbids what is naturally gratifying to us in a high degree? Do we love it, and acquiesce in it lovingly when it prescribes suffering for us, as well as when it allows us an easy lot and few trials? Do we at all events strive and pray to love it? To love God is to love His name; and His name, be it remembered, is holiness as well as love. Do we love holiness? love the strictness of God's law? or do we desire, on

the contrary, that its stringency, as regards ourselves, should be somewhat relaxed, that so high a standard of duty should not be insisted upon? Do we honestly desire to be drawn into a still closer and closer intercourse from the feeling that it might involve us in sacrifices for which we are not prepared? Among men a mere groundless fancy may often go under the name of love; but to all higher forms of love moral congeniality between the parties is essential. Is there, then, between us and God any moral congeniality? Are we at all like God in His free and expansive sympathy with all creatures irrational as well as rational? in His absolute detestation of sin?" Do we rejoice in God as our Father through Jesus Christ, and does He rejoice over us as His lost children found, and once more in His beloved family? Do we take pleasure in drawing nigh to Him as He does in drawing nigh unto us? Do we realise in our experience the Saviour's promise, that the Father and Himself have come unto us and made their abode with us? By questions of this kind we may be able to ascertain the character of our love to God.

FORMALITY IN RELIGION.

Mere formality in compliments, attention, service, in the social and business life, is viewed with disapprobation, and is injurious to those who pay them, rather than beneficial. How much more objectionable must it be in *religion*! To kiss the Saviour and yet betray Him; to bow the knee with "Hail Master" on the lip, while in the life we crucify Him; to read His Word, and neither believe nor practise it; to repeat His commandments and yet transgress them; to attend His house and not forsake the house of devils; to be called a Christian and live as an infidel;—this is a formality cursed by Christ, a bane to religion, and damning to him who practises it. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **DOETH THE WILL** of my Father which is in heaven, Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in

Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And THEN will I profess unto them, I NEVER knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. vii, 21—23).

If such is the evil nature and dreadful consequences of the mere form of religion, let us examine ourselves whether we have anything more. Shall we be satisfied with the sheep's clothing upon the "ravening wolf?" Shall we cast aside the kernel and treasure the shell? Shall we show no more wisdom than to prefer the counterfeit coin to the genuine? Will a painted fire in the grate warm us on a winter's day? Will a mock sun disperse the darkness and illuminate the hemisphere? What will avail all the tinsel ornaments which cover us when the concealed disease has consumed us in death? Brother, let us labour for a "TRUE HEART;" for the "POWER OF GODLINESS." Let us seek to stand with Paul, who said, "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the SPIRIT, and rejoice in CHRIST JESUS, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii, 3).

THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
My sinful maladies remove;
Be Thou my Light, be Thou my Guide,
O'er every thought and step preside.

The light of truth to me display,
That I may know and choose my way;
Plant holy fear within my heart,
That I from God may ne'er depart.

Conduct me safe, conduct me far
From every sin and hurtful snare;
Lead me to God, my final rest,
In His enjoyment to be blest.

Lead me to Christ, the living way,
Nor let me from His pastures stray;

Lead me to heaven, the seat of bliss,
Where pleasure in perfection is.

Lead me to means of grace, where I
May own my wants, and seek supply :
Lead to Thyself, the spring from whence
To fetch all quickening influence.

Thus I, conducted still by Thee,
Of God a child beloved shall be,
Here to His family pertain,
Hereafter with Him ever reign.

Simon Browne.

CHAPTER XI.

(Eleventh Meeting.)

WALKING IN RELIGION.

Religion is a way, and you should walk in it. It is the narrow way, and you should be careful to walk in it circumspectly. It is a holy way, and you should walk in it without sin. It is an honorable way, and you should walk in it with a heavenly dignity. It is a way in which there are difficulties, trials, enemies, duties, responsibilities, and you should walk in it in the spirit of prayer, faith, courage, earnestness, and perseverance. It is this way that leads from sin to holiness; from hell to heaven; and you should walk in it daily, making joyful and safe progress towards the ends to which it leads.

Walk, therefore, and walk on—go forward; for if you are in the way of life, not to go forward is to go backward. If you are entered into this happy path, step not aside, give not back. A dog returning to his vomit is a foul and ugly thing to behold. Take heed, I say, of backsliding. It is a dreadful thing to forsake Christ, and to be ashamed of the Gospel. Walk, therefore; go on from strength to strength, from virtue to virtue. God grant that there be not a retiring from strength to weakness,

from virtue to sinfulness. Walk not as those of whom St. Paul speaks with tears, "Whose God is their belly, whose glory is their shame—who mind earthly things;" but rather walk as those who are wise in heaven's wisdom, strong in God's strength. Walk in the light, as God is in the light. Walk in the truth, as Christ is the truth. Walk uprightly, as under the inspection of your greatest friends and greatest foes. Walk as a man who is travelling through a wilderness in a foreign land surrounded with danger, with home before him, and making haste to be enclosed within its plenteous comforts.

WEAKNESS OF SIN.

We sometimes look upon sin as the spies looked upon the sons of Anak—a giant of great strength far beyond our subjugation, if not beyond that of God. In this, however, we are mistaken. Sin itself is a weak and impotent thing, and proceeds from weakness. It consists not properly in any native power and strength which it hath within itself, but in an impotency and privation of all true being and perfection; and, therefore, wheresoever anything of God appears it will destroy it. He that is born of God shall overcome the world, the devil, and sin; for the seed of God remaineth in him. All such are well able to slay the accursed thing within them, as Joshua said that the Israelites were well able to go up and take possession of Canaan. In proportion as the nature and life of God are within us, sin will diminish in its size and strength, and we shall see it to be more and more puerile and feeble. If, then, you feel that sin is a power against which you find it hard to struggle, impute it rather to the weakness of grace within you than to the strength of sin. Arm yourself with the mind of Christ, and a fixed resolution to serve the will and pleasure of God, and you need not fear what sin and hell can do to you. Let Christ in His pure nature occupy the whole kingdom of your soul, and sin shall be expelled. There shall not be room for the sole of its foot. It shall not hover or breathe there. If it come to you it shall be as Satan came to Christ—to find that it

hath nothing in you. Let Jesus thus have your whole will and affections, your whole subjection and obedience, and sin shall be a *nothing* to you. It may exist in others around you in great power, but in you it shall be a thing unfelt.

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD.

You may have your trials in life the same as all others, but if you love God you have the assurance that they shall ultimately yield you good and not evil. He whom you love is the Governor of all things, and will, without a doubt, order everything so as to promote the good of them that love Him. If in sailing over life's sea you pass through a storm, He is at the helm of your bark. He holds the winds in His power. He contains the waters in the hollow of His hand; and He will command the ship, the wind, and the waters, to preserve you safe and help you on the sooner to your desired haven. If you are walking in darkness, then darkness is as the light to Him; He knows the way you take, and He will bring you forth into a sunshine which will appear all the brighter for the darkness in which you have walked for a time. If you suffer bereavement, He it is who gave and who taketh away; and He will command death to serve your interests in leading you to nearer union with Himself, in raising you to a higher life in holiness, in setting your affections more warmly upon heaven. If you suffer a severe contest "with principalities and powers," He will so guide the battle that the results shall be another victory added to your account, another gem set in your crown, another battle nearer the kingdom for which you contend. If you inadvertently fall into sin, and seek forgiveness for the same, He will even order this so that it shall deepen your humility, increase your watchfulness, and enliven your love. If you have a "hill difficulty" to climb, that shall bring you to clearer visions of God and the glory to be revealed. Death itself shall be the door to life. Thus all things shall work together for your good. Then trust in God. Give to the winds your fears. "Rejoice evermore; and in everything give thanks."

DEAD UNTO SIN.

"As when you reckon with your creditor," says John Fletcher, "or with your host ; and, as when you have paid all, you reckon yourself free, so now reckon with God. Jesus hath paid all, and He hath paid for thee ! hath purchased thy pardon and holiness. Therefore it is God's command, 'Reckon thyself dead indeed unto sin, and thou art alive unto God from this hour !' O begin, begin to reckon now ! Fear not. Believe, believe, believe ! And continue to believe every moment. So shalt thou continue free ; for it is retained as it is received, by faith alone. And whosoever thou art that perseveringly believest, it will be as fire in thy bosom, and constrain thee to confess with thy mouth thy Lord and King, Jesus. And in spreading the sacred flame of love thou shalt still be saved to the uttermost."

A SOFT ANSWER.

It behoves the Christian to be meek in his disposition ; and in his answers to imperious, angry, and insulting language, to speak in kindness and love. "A soft answer turneth away wrath," says the wise man. It was Abigail's gentle apology for her husband that turned away the fury of David, and disarmed him of his revengeful intentions. It was Gideon's mild and modest answer that quieted the excited Ephraimites. Angry words interchanged soon enkindle fiery tempers ; but love is a power which allays the turbulent soul. "Lay but a flint upon a pillow," says one, "and you break it easily ; but hard to hard will never do the deed. It is not the vying one angry word with another ; grievous words stir up strife, harsh and angry words cast oil upon the flame ; set the passions afloat, and then there is no hope, not one wise word to be expected."

INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

Pray not only for yourself, but for others ; not only for

others which come within the circle of your family or friendship; but let your prayers be as comprehensive as the family of God, as the will of God, as the salvation of the Gospel. The Scriptures specify that we are to pray for kings; for all in authority; for ministers; for the Church; for all saints; for all men; for our children, our friends, our fellow-countrymen, our enemies, our persecutors; those that envy us, despise us, forsake us.

By this intercessory prayer we give an evidence that our religion is genuine; that we love all; that our wills concur in the Divine will in its benevolence; that we sympathise with the Redeemer in His desire to see all saved: we foster mercy, compassion, zeal, and charity towards those for whom we pray.

Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Solomon, Elisha, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Nehemiah, David, Ezekiel, Daniel, Stephen, Peter and John, the Church of Jerusalem, Paul, and JESUS CHRIST, are excellent examples of intercessory prayer.

The answers which have come to intercessory prayers upon individuals, families, churches, nations, and the world, only God knows to whom the prayers have been offered, and from whom the answers have descended.

"He that in prayer," says Leighton, "minds none but himself, doubtless he is not right in minding himself. Howsoever, this he may be sure of, that, in keeping out others from his prayers, he bars himself from the benefit of all others' prayers likewise. If thou prayest for thyself alone, thou alone prayest for thyself, says St. Ambrose."

REASONS FOR AFFLICTIONS.

What is the reason that by persecutions and afflictions, by one grievance or another, God brings His children to such a low ebb? The reasons are many.

The first may be, *He will thus try what mettle they are made of.* Light afflictions, light crosses, will not try them thoroughly; great ones will. Jonah, that slept in the ship, falls a-praying in the whale's belly. He that was pettish out

of trouble, and falls a-quarrelling with God Himself in trouble, he falls to praying when he was in the bottom of hell, as he says himself. Little afflictions may stand with murmuring and repining, but great ones try indeed what we are. What we are in great afflictions, we are indeed.

God does this for another end,—*that He might be sure by this means to prepare us for greater blessings.* For in what deep measure we are humbled by any deep affliction, in that measure we are prepared for some blessing. Humility empties the soul, and crosses breed humility. The emptiness of the soul fits it for receipt. God therefore empties us by crosses, that we may be fit vessels to receive some larger measure of grace and comfort. As our tribulations increase, so our comforts increase. Therefore it is a good sign that God intends much spiritual good to any man, when He lays some heavy load upon him in this world. All is to prepare for some greater comfort and some greater measure of grace:

Why does the husbandman fall upon his ground, and tear and rend it up with the plough, and the better the ground is the more he labours to kill weeds? Is it because he has an ill mind to the ground? No. He means to sow good seed there, and he will not plough a whit longer than may serve to prepare the ground. So God keeps His children under crosses, and ploughs them. They neglect to plough themselves, and He is fain to set ploughers that will do it indeed,—some ill-minded men, or some crosses. If they would plough themselves and examine themselves, they might spare God the labour. But when they are negligent, God takes the labour into His own hand, and sets others on work that will do it to purpose. But all is to prepare them for heavenly seed, for grace and comfort, that in what measure we have been depressed, in that measure He means to lift us up by heavenly comfort.—*Sibbes.*

THE JOY OF THE LORD OUR STRENGTH.

Joy as the result of pardon and the accompaniment of

reconciliation with God is the privilege of all Christians. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Observe, this joy is the joy of the Lord: from Him in its origin, like him in its nature, by Him in its support, to Him in its operations. Its seat is the inner spiritual man; the new man created in regeneration. This joy, then, is altogether different to the joy of sin, the joy of the world, or even the joy of creation.

How is the joy of the Lord in the Christian his strength? Let us see. Do you see the joy of sin in the sinner? That is his strength to transgress the laws of God and to resist all influences to a religious life. Do you see the joy of the world in the worldling? That is his strength to follow after the multitude of worldly objects which engage his attention. Look at the joy of childhood and youth,—what strength of elasticity, gladness, development it bestows. Look at the joy of anticipation in the mind—what strength it imparts in the pursuit of the things anticipated. These allusions will furnish illustrations, to some extent, of the point before us. You have, as a Christian, a heavy duty to perform; the joy of the Lord in your soul moves you with pleasure to its performance, and is your strength in the act. But for that you would be depressed too low to reach it, and regard it as an irksome, if not an impossible task. You have a cross to take up in the way of persecution, suffering, confession of Christ. Were you possessed of nothing but what is your own, you would shrink from the endurance of it. But "the joy of the Lord" so invigorates, that you feel most happy as well as vigorous, to take up your cross and follow Christ. Let "the joy of the Lord" remain in you and be full, and there is no duty, trial, affliction, or temptation in the Christian life, but you shall find that joy to be your strength—a strength all-sufficient and unfailing.

DOUBTS AND FEARS.

You are troubled with doubts and fears. Whence come they? Search for their cause; and when you have found it, seek grace from God to remove it. Mr. Whitecross speaks of an eminent minister who was much troubled with doubts and fears concerning his own salvation, and many of his hearers, who laboured under similar distress, coming daily to him increased the burden. One day, after much wrestling with God in prayer for deliverance, it was impressed upon his mind to go to such a place, and he would find a person that would be of spiritual use to him. Accordingly, on passing through his own churchyard, he met a very aged man to whom the minister observed, "It is a good day." The old man answered, "I never saw a bad day in my lifetime." At hearing this, the minister, fetching a deep sigh, asked him "how it was that he who appeared to be such an old man had never seen a bad day?" To which the other replied, "My mind is so sunk in the will of God, that knowing His mercy, wisdom, and goodness, whatever is His will is my will." "And what," said the minister, "if God was to cast you into hell, would you be resigned to His will in that particular?" To which it was answered, "God hath given me two long arms, the arm of faith and the arm of hope; and was the Lord even to cast me into hell I would not let go my hold of Him." This simple word was so blessed to the afflicted minister, that from thenceforth he could rejoice in the Lord as his God.

A KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNERRING WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF GOD, WITH A MIND FULLY "SUNK" IN THE WILL OF GOD, FORM A SURE REMEDY FOR ALL DOUBTS AND FEARS.

EVIDENCE OF LOVE TO CHRIST.

Are you wishful to know whether you love Christ? This is a very important knowledge to desire; and it is a knowledge which you may attain unto. You may have the tearful eye,

the hearing ear, the emotional heart, the loud profession in religion, and yet *not love Christ*. But if you keep His commandments, this is a proof that you love Him, whatever else may be wanting. There may be some shortcomings and imperfections in your love, but if the aim and motive are perfect through the grace which He imparts, then He takes your obedience as an evidence of love to Him.

It is the *obedience* of a servant that shows respect for his master. It is the obedience of a child that proves the love of the child to the parent. If you come to Christ as your Prophet, and hear Him in His teachings, it is not the pleasure you feel under His truths in their exhibition of beauty, harmony, and heavenliness, nor is it the ready assent which you give to those truths in their unqualified fulness, but your prompt and hearty *practice* of them in your life, that proves your love to Him. If you come to Him as your Priest, it is not your admiration of His priestly robes and dignity, of the grandeur of His sacrifice and the benevolence of His atonement, but the believing reliance of your soul upon Him as *your* High Priest and sacrifice, in obedience to His Word, that evinces your love to Him. If you come to Him as your King, it is not the outward homage you pay to His person, nor the verbal praise of His glories, nor the loud pretensions of your loyalty, but the earnest acceptance of His laws and the full obedience of them in your life, that declares your love to Him. "This is the love of God, that we **KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS**; and His commandments are not grievous." "If ye love me **KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS**."

HEAVENLY COMMUNION.

'Tis heaven begun below
To hear Christ's praises flow
In Zion, where His name is known :
What will it be above
To sing redeeming love,
And cast our crowns before His throne !

When we adore Him there,
We shall be void of fear,
Nor faith, nor hope, nor patience need;
Love will absorb us quite,
Love in the midst of light,
On God's eternal love shall feed.

O! what sweet company
We then shall hear and see!
What harmony will there abound!
When souls unnumber'd sing
The praise of Zion's King,
Nor one dissenting voice is found!

With everlasting joy,
Such as will never cloy,
We shall be fill'd, nor wish for more;
Bright as meridian day,
Calm as the evening ray,
Full as a sea without a shore.

Till that blest period come
Zion shall be my home;
And may I never thence remove,
Till from the Church below
To heaven at once I go,
And there commune in perfect love.

Joseph Swain.

CHAPTER XII.

(Twelfth Meeting.)

WITNESSING FOR JESUS.

Just before He ascended into heaven He declared to His apostles the chief work of their lives: "Ye shall be *witnesses* unto me." And is not this the work of the Christian *now*? Did

we hear Jesus speaking to us from His throne in the heavens, would He not say unto *us*, "Ye are my witnesses?" Who shall be His living witnesses if not His own people? If *we* have faith in Jesus, love to ~~Jesus~~, zeal for Jesus, shall we not be as willing to witness for Him as ~~were~~ the apostles themselves? Are we ready to witness ~~as~~ Protestants for Luther, or as Wesleyans for Wesley, or as Englishmen for England or England's queen? Surely we ought to be equally ready to witness for Him from whom all gifts and graces in ourselves and in all men, have proceeded—for Him who has loved us and given Himself for us.

"It is ours to witness for Jesus," says Boardman, "but our testimony cannot go beyond our experience. With the apostles we cannot but speak the things we have seen and felt; but the things we have not seen and felt we cannot speak effectively and convincingly. The Holy Ghost first witnesses to us, before we can witness to others the things of experience. The convinced soul, like Leigh Richmond in the days of his conviction, may testify for the law in its heart-searching length and breadth, and the converted soul may testify for the Gospel in its power to bring sweet assurance of sins forgiven and the hope of heaven, but it is only him who has also found by similar deeper experience the way of sanctification by faith, who can point to Jesus as the deliverer from sin in like manner as from its penalty." But if we cannot witness for Jesus in the fullest extent, we may in the less; and to this we are bound. According to our light, our opportunities, and the Spirit's testimony in us, we are under obligation to witness for our Saviour. By this the world shall know that Christ still lives, and that we are His disciples.

SHELTER IN CALAMITY.

The way to meet any calamity that you may see coming upon you, is to avail yourself of the shelter provided for you, and this is none other than the LORD JEHOVAH. Any other shelter will be frail and useless. HE is the Rock which no

floods can overwhelm; the High Tower that no enemies can surmount; the Shield that no darts can pierce; the Refuge that no avenger can enter; the Harbour that no storms can agitate. The Psalmist found the Lord to be such a shelter in his calamities; therefore he says, "I will not be afraid of ten thousand people that have set themselves against me round about" (Ps. iii, 6).

"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep, for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (Ps. iv, 8).

"What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee" (Ps. lvi, 3).

"In the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast" (Ps. lvii, 1).

"I will say unto the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him will I trust" (Ps. xci, 2).

"I will abide in Thy tabernacle for ever. I will trust in the covert of Thy wings" (Ps. lxi, 4).

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. xxiii, 4).

"Who in the Lord confide,
And feel His sprinkled blood,
In storms and hurricanes abide,
Firm as the mount of God.
As round Jerusalem
The hilly bulwarks rise,
So God protects and covers them
From all their enemies."

BODILY SANCTITY.

Our bodies are the workmanship of God, are redeemed by Christ, and are temples of the Holy Ghost. Therefore we should hold them sacred to holy things. If we have presented them to God, "a holy, living, acceptable sacrifice," they are His; and, as His property, we are bound to keep them in honour and purity. Hence the injunctions of Scripture upon this particular: "Mortify your members which are upon the

earth ; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. iii, 5). "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body ; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Cor. vi, 18). "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication : that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour ; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God. For God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness (1 Thess. iv, 3—6, 7).

WORK FOR REPENTANCE.

It is stated in the life of Mrs. Savage, an excellent sister of Matthew Henry, that when some respectable pious gentlemen were one Sabbath evening assembled together they unhappily engaged in conversation unbecoming the day. Betty Parsons, a good old woman, overhearing them, said, "Sirs, you are making work for repentance!" Alas, is it not to be feared that some of us often make work for repentance, not only by irreligious conversation on the Sabbath, but by the indulgence of tempers and words in our daily affairs, which are averse to the spirit of our religion—by the omission of duties which we know to be obligatory upon us, and practicable by us ! The nearer we live to the rules of Scripture and the light of conscience, the less work for repentance shall we entail upon ourselves for the future.

A DESIRE TO BE SAVED.

A desire to be saved and to flee from the wrath to come is the condition of uniting with the Methodist Church, according to the rules as left by Mr. Wesley. If you had not this desire I do not think you would wish to enter into such Christian fellowship as this meeting represents. Having the desire, you have done well to manifest it in the way you have. But do not let the desire rest here in its manifestation. Use

this means with a view to enlarge and strengthen the desire until it shall have developed into the actual possession of the blessing you seek. Let the experience of Christ's people, as you hear it now and on other occasions; let the reading of the Scriptures and private devotions; let the hearing of the Word and abstaining from the appearance of evil; let the Spirit of God in His influence upon you, bring on your desire into repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

What a blessing is even a desire for salvation! Thousands are without it, and would give pearls and jewels to purchase it. Alas, they have hardened their hearts through unbelief, and are now past feeling. A desire is a spark of holy fire from heaven; fan it, so that it may rise to a glowing heat of intensest love: it is the dawn of Gospel light in the soul; let it increase more and more unto the perfect day: it is the sprouting of the seed of truth in the heart; let it grow on into the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear: it is the bud and blossom of the fruits of righteousness; cultivate them until the harvest shall appear to the glory of God. Do not be ashamed to let it be known that you have this desire. Remember that in *that* desire, however feeble and small, may be enfolded, as the leaf in the bud and the fruit in the blossom, your PRESENT AND EVERLASTING SALVATION.

A CHRISTIAN.

Do you desire to be a Christian? There is much more in being a Christian than having the name. "The Christian," says Bishop Hall, "is a man, and more; an earthly saint, an angel clothed in flesh, the only lawful image of his Maker and Redeemer; the abstract of God's Church on earth; a model of heaven made up in clay; the living temple of the Holy Ghost.

"For his disposition, it hath in it as much of heaven as this earth may make room for. He were not a man if he were quite free from corrupt affections; but these he masters, and keeps in with a strait hand; and if at any time they grow

testy and headstrong he breaks them with a severe discipline, and will rather punish himself than not tame them. He checks his appetite with discreet but strong denials, and forbears to pamper nature lest it grow wanton and impetuous. He walks on earth, but converses in heaven, having his eyes fixed on the invisible world, and enjoying a sweet communion with his God and Saviour. While all the rest of the world sits in darkness, he lives in a perpetual light; the heaven of heavens is open to none but him; thither his eye pierceth, and beholds those beams of inaccessible glory which shine in no face but his.

"He is holily temperate in the use of all God's blessings, as knowing by whom they are given, and to what end; neither dares either to mislay them, or to misspend them lavishly, and only weighing upon what terms he receives them, and fore-expecting an account. Such a hand doth he carry upon his pleasures and delights that they run not away with him: he knows how to slacken the reins without a debauched kind of dissoluteness, and how to straiten them without sullen rigour."

DEPENDING UPON FEELINGS.

Nothing can be more unwise or unsafe in religion than to depend upon feelings. These are the creatures of contingent causes. The state of the body, the mind, the weather, the opinions of others, the things we see, read, and hear, materially influence our feelings. The captain in crossing the ocean does not for safety altogether depend upon the wind or weather; but also upon his ship, his compass, his men, and his own acquired ability. A commander in battle does not depend upon the scabbards, the clothing, the changing appearances and relations of the soldiers, but upon their fidelity, courage, and patriotism. An advocate of the truth does not depend upon the many aspects, reports, and colourings of truth which float about, but upon the truth itself as he is enabled to discover it, apart from these. So you should not depend upon the feelings which you may have, as religion, but upon religion itself,

in its Scriptural simplicity of faith, love, prayer, and purity. To rest on your feelings will be to rise and fall, ebb and flow like the tide, to change and turn about like the wind. When you have good feeling, you will then have good religion; when little or no feeling, little or no religion. Mark, I am far from saying that there are no feelings connected with religion. There is, and the finest, clearest, highest, noblest feelings of which man can be the subject. But what I mean is, that simple feeling is not religion, and to rely upon feeling only as religion would be self-deception. Just as there may be air when it is not agitated into a gale or tempest; just as there may be light, though the heavens are overhung with clouds; just as there may be life, even when the body is not tremulous with fear or elated with joy: so there may be religion in your soul, despite the want of certain feelings which you may desire, or in the possession of certain feelings which you may dislike. Remember that religion consists in *love to Christ, as the effect of faith in Him, and producing obedience to Him*: and in proportion to this faith, love, and obedience, is your religion, whatever your feelings may be; and upon these you should depend, and not upon your feelings.

ACCESS TO GOD THROUGH CHRIST.

The Scriptures recognise no other way to God than Jesus Christ; and Him, not so much in His teachings and authority as in His *death and Priesthood*. He Himself declares, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: NO MAN cometh unto the Father BUT BY ME" (John xiv, 6). "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God...let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. iv, 14, 16). "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by THE BLOOD OF JESUS, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled

from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. x, 19—22). Not prophets, not apostles, not angels, not saints, not ministers, not good works, not rites and ordinances, but JESUS CHRIST, is the one and ONLY Way of access to God,—to know Him, to love Him, to be reconciled to Him, to be adopted into His family, to be made a partaker of His nature, and to be received into His glory.

PERSONAL SEARCHING OF THE SCRIPTURES.

God in His Word addresses Himself to *each one*, and it behoves each one to read and search the Word for himself. Study it as though you were the only one to whom it was sent, and in doing so it shall enlighten your mind, correct your errors, and thoroughly furnish you unto all good works. A gentleman was once struck with the Scriptural knowledge which was possessed by an old lady with whom he was conversing. He asked her how she had attained such knowledge, when she said, "Sir, much is lost by not considering the Word of God as addressed to us as individuals. For these thirty years I have read the Word of God, carefully attended every part of it, as if I had been the only person in the world to whom it was addressed; and if I know anything above my neighbours, under the blessing of God I owe it entirely to this practice."

DEPENDENCE UPON GOD.

There is no greater truth than our dependence upon God. This truth is of universal application. EVERY good gift cometh from Him; and without Him we should have no good gift at all. We ought to feel our absolute dependence upon God for all things more deeply, and acknowledge it more gratefully. The earth is no more dependent upon the sun in its light, attraction, heat, &c., than we upon God. The newborn babe is no more dependent upon its mother than we are upon our Father who is in heaven. Natural and spiritual life alike came from Him, and are maintained by Him, and will return to Him. The least blessing of grace as of nature flows

from Him. In one word, "In Him we live, move, and have our being." If we realise this truth in all its force, we shall—

1. Commit ourselves to God for His protection in the exercise of His providence and grace. We shall rest under the shadow of His wings, and He will cover us with His feathers.

2. We shall place ourselves in His hands for protection and preservation in His own way. Self-will must have no choice in the matter. Following the course which *we* think to be right must be far from us. "Keep in His ways," says Dr. Lightfoot, "and He will keep thee; be doing His work and He will take care of thee; a Christian should always be doing of that as that he may lawfully and warrantably beg God's blessing upon him while he is doing it. Join prayer and well-doing together, and thou art sure to speed well."

3. We shall so depend upon God that our preservation by Him will redound to His praise and glory. We shall say in the spirit of Jacob, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way, so that I come again to my Father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God."

STARTING FOR HEAVEN.

If you wish to go to a distant city or country there must be a *starting* in the way, whatever may be the means which you may choose to convey you; so if you wish to go to the better country, that is, a heavenly, there must be a commencement of the journey to it, whatever may be the section of the Church and character of its means which you prefer to convey you on that journey.

Have you started for heaven, my brother? If so, it is one of the best starts you ever made. There is no doubt but you felt difficulty in the effort. You had much to contend with from yourself, your circumstances, your great adversary the devil; but by Divine help you have overcome and begun the Christian race. Even now you may have opposition. As Bunyan's pilgrim, when he set out for the celestial city, you may have those of your friends and neighbours who regard you

as mad, and come crying after you to stop you ; but, like him, close your ears from their railings, entreaties, or enticements. Run with all your might, exclaiming as you go, " Life, life ! I am bound for life ; by the Lord's help I am determined to escape the city of destruction and enter into everlasting life."

If you have thus started for heaven you have started aright, and though you will have many things to hinder you in your career, you will have none that need stop or turn you back. If you have not yet crossed the slough of despond, that need not turn you back, for there is One to help you through and lift you out ; if you have not yet entered the wicket-gate, that need not turn you from your course, for there is One also standing to open it and give you a loving welcome. In a word, as I have said, there is nothing need put you aside from the way. As you have started so you may go on, until you appear in Zion before God.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

Yes, God is good, in earth and sky,
From ocean depths and spreading wood,
TEN thousand voices seem to cry,
" God made us all and God is good."

The sun that keeps his trackless way,
And downward pours his golden flood,
Night's sparkling hosts, all seem to say,
In accents clear, that God is good.

The merry birds prolong the strain,
Their song with every spring renewed,
And balmy air and falling rain,
Each softly whisper, " God is good."

I hear it in the rushing breeze ;
The hills that have for ages stood,
The echoing sky and roaring seas,
All swell the chorus, " God is good."

Yes, God is good, all nature says,
By God's own hand with speech endued ;
And man, in louder notes of praise,
Should sing for joy that God is good.

For all Thy gifts we bless Thee, Lord !
But chiefly for our heavenly food,
Thy pardoning grace, Thy quickening Word ;—
These prompt our song that God is good.

J. H. Gurney.

CHAPTER XIII.

(Thirteenth Meeting.)

INSTABILITY IN RELIGION.

THERE are two evils which directly flow from instability—one to yourself and one to religion. It prevents you growing and excelling in religion ; more than this, it robs you of a degree of already existing grace : so that if you continue to indulge in this defect of character it will deprive you of all grace and leave you among the “castaways” for ever. An unstable person can make no *progress*. He pulls down one week or day what he built in the previous one. He goes back in the journey as much or more at one time than he went forward at another. An unstable person is *unreliable* ; like the wind, he shifts about, so that you cannot depend upon his state, his work, his feelings, for any length of time. As the water, unstable, ebbing and flowing, clear and muddy, running and stagnant, so is he. As the weather, which now is cold, and then mild, so is he. You cannot repose any trust in him, or consign any work of importance to him. An unstable person is *unhappy*. He may sometimes have gleams of sunshine, but the most of his days are passed in clouds. A second evil is to *Religion*. He misrepresents religion to the

world. Those who cannot distinguish between religion and its professors will say that religion is faulty. Hence upon her will be poured reproaches and scandals; and many souls may from this one cause be prevented from embracing her.

Is this evil in any way associated with your character? Guard and struggle against it. Be resolved in the strength of grace to master it. Let your religion be one of principle, constancy, firmness. Let not the willow, bending before every breeze, be your emblem; but rather the cedar in Lebanon, or the grand oak of the forest. As a "tree of righteousness," be *rooted* in love; as a "building of the Lord," be *grounded* on Christ as the Foundation.

DESIRING MORE ZEAL FOR CHRIST.

You cannot have too much pure zeal for Him who was so zealously affected for your salvation as to die to procure it. Were the zeal of a seraph yours it would be right for you to desire more. You have some zeal for the Saviour; but when measured with that of other Christians, and the Apostles, and especially Christ's, you find it deficient. You think it might be increased and inflamed. So it may by the use of proper means. If you want the water in a vessel to swell with more heat you increase the fire under it; if you want the fire of the room to throw out more warmth you increase the fuel or stir up the fire and fuel that are there; if you want to feel more enthusiastic in any political, social, or business cause, you pursue certain methods to realise your object. So you must do in the matter of Christian zeal. The increase of the Saviour's love within your heart will, by its constraining influence, excite you to greater efforts to advance His glory and truth in the world; the increase of the spirit of prayer will assist in the same object. If you grow in the knowledge of Christ and think more deeply of the claims of the world upon you; consider your responsibility for your gifts and graces; weigh well the worth of souls, and the needs of the Church, you will feel that the zeal which you have is aroused to intenser action and

deeper power. And with this increased zeal will come increased usefulness, increased personal piety, increased happiness. Not only so, but you will communicate to others, and they will catch the flame. You will aspire to a holy fivallship with the most zealous saints. You will understand what is meant by "the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up." You will blend the two excellencies of the Baptist's character,—be a burning and a shining light. Everything that interests Christ, His Church, and the salvation of His redeemed world, will enlist your sympathies and labours.

ACKNOWLEDGING GOD IN SPECIAL MERCIES.

If you have received any special favours from God, do not fail to acknowledge them to His glory—

First, before your brethren, that they may rejoice with you and blend their notes with yours in praising God. This was what the Psalmist did when he had obtained some special good to his soul: "Come unto me all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." The woman, when she had found her lost piece of silver, called her neighbours and friends to rejoice with her; so did the shepherd when he found his lost sheep. The jailer, when he found salvation, rejoiced in God with all his house, and with the Apostle Paul and Silas. "Let us not be ashamed," says one, "to glorify God by telling what we know and feel He has done; let us watch our opportunity to bring out distinctly the fact of His having done something for us; let us feel delighted at having an opportunity from our own experience of telling what must turn to His praise; and them that honour God, God will honour in turn; if we be willing to talk of His deeds, He will give us enough to talk about."

Secondly, before the world, that the world may learn the true character of God and see that we are His people. "It is no wonder," says Power, "that the world knows so little about the Lord when He is so little brought before them by His own people. We ought not to be continually receiving

good things from God without ever speaking of them; for example, if a child has been grievously ill and we are congratulated on his recovery, and we know and feel that we owe that recovery to the Lord Himself, we should not allow our friends to go away without our distinctly recognising *before* them, and *to* them, the gracious working of God; without "showing forth His marvellous work." How often do we allow the physician, and the medicine, and the change of air, and all such means to be spoken of, and we are silent about the One from whom they derive their efficacy. Who can tell what a blessed effect this recognising praise would have upon many of our relatives and friends? When they heard us in the sincerity and fervour of our hearts acknowledge God they might be led to think, to repent, to pray, and to turn unto Him whose great goodness we have magnified with our praise.

DO NOT DESPAIR.

You may feel yourself very unworthy, arising from a sense of your many backslidings of heart, and your many shortcomings in life; but you need not despair of mercy and heaven. John Newton, who was a great monument of the power of God to save, oftentimes felt depressed when he considered his life before conversion, and his unfaithfulness after. But hear what he says:—"Had the Saviour come to befriend the righteous I could have no claim; but I read He came to save sinners, and that He is able to save them to the uttermost. His own Word and Spirit first invited and enabled me to venture my all upon Him. I know that I have committed myself to Him a thousand times; how, then, can He give me up? Thus I endeavour to reason against the enemy: he can easily prove that I am worthless, ungrateful, and unfaithful; but he cannot prove that Jesus did not die, or that He did not say, 'Him that cometh unto me I will *in no wise cast out.*' I would not part with this text for all the world; it some-

times seems the only one I can lay hold of; but *in no wise* extends to all the complicated varieties of my case."

THE TEMPORAL SACRIFICED FOR THE SPIRITUAL.

Such were the views that St. Paul had of the superiority of spiritual to temporal things, that he says, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith." "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Phil. iii, 8, 9; Rom. iii, 22).

GOD FIGHTETH FOR THE CHRISTIAN.

As Joshua said to Israel, so we may believe Jesus says to His people, "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, He it is that fighteth for you, as He hath promised." Such a signal and extensive victory is only occasioned by the Lord fighting for us; or otherwise, instead of one of us chasing a thousand of our enemies, one of our enemies would chase a thousand of us. David found that the Lord was his shield, his defence, his salvation, as He promised. And so have all His people who have entered into His service. "While we strive against sin," says John Smith, "we may safely expect that the Divinity itself will strive with us, and give that strength and power unto us that shall, at last, make us more than conquerors. As he who projects wickedness shall be sure to find Satan standing at his right hand, ready to assist him in it: so he that pursues after God and holiness shall find God nearer to him than he is to himself, in the free and liberal communications of Himself to him. He that goes out in God's battles, fighting under our Saviour's banner, may look upwards, and opening his eyes, may see the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire round about him. God hath not so

much delight in the death and destruction of men, as to see them struggling and contending for life, and Himself standing by as a looker on. No : but with the most tender and fatherly compassions His bowels yearn over them, and His Almighty arm is stretched forth for them ; and in His strength they shall prevail ; they shall be borne up as on eagle's wings ; they shall walk in the might of His strength, who is able to save, and not faint." There, there, my brother, is encouragement for you in the warfare of the Christian life. With such a helper, you cannot fail. Victory is as certain as the conflict. "The Lord of hosts is with you." He it is that fighteth for you.

DIFFERENCE IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

It would seem, from an examination of things, that there is a similar variety in the development of Christian character, to what there is in the development of everything else which has life. All children are alike in their essential elements at birth ; but though there is then such a similarity, yet as they advance in life, what wonderful differences are seen in their characters ! All light is essentially the same, but what a variety of colours and shades do we see in it, according to the objects on which it falls, and the mediums through which it shines ! All wood is essentially the same, but into how many parts is it divided, growing up in an endless diversity of trees ! This essential unity and yet variety may be observed throughout the universe. So it is in the experience of Christians. Conversion is the same in its nature in all who have passed through the change ; but the means vary. The experience based upon that conversion differs in its phases and expressions, but in the essence of it, it is the same in all, and the same everywhere. For example : your faith is the same in its nature as that of any Christian, but it may differ in its degree, life, and power : so your love, your zeal, your spiritual knowledge, your hope, your joy, your prayers, your usefulness. It is therefore wrong for you to say you have no Christian experience, because it does not come up to the standard of other

Christians. A child is not a man, nevertheless it partakes of his nature and powers. A sapling is not the massive oak, but it is of the same species. A violet is not a moss-rose; but it is a flower, and gives its beautiful fragrance.

A multitude of things co-operate to occasion this diversity in nature and grace. Do the best you can in religion, in the sphere in which God has placed you, the same as you do in business. God does not require you to shine as the sun, if He has placed you only in the orbit of the moon, and given no more than her powers.

FORETASTES OF HEAVEN.

Bunyan gives us a beautiful description of these in his account of the land of Beulah, to which the pilgrims came on their way to the Celestial City. "Now I saw in my dream, that by this time the pilgrims were got over the Enchanted Ground, and entering into the country of Beulah (Isa. lxii, 4—12; Cant. ii, 10—12), whose air was very sweet and pleasant; the way lying directly through it, they solaced themselves there for a season. Yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land. In this country the sun shineth night and day; wherefore, this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they were within sight of the city they were going to: also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof; for in this land the shining ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven. In this land also the contract between the Bride and the Bridegroom was renewed; yea, here, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so doth their God rejoice over them. Here they had no want of corn and wine; for in this place they met with abundance of what they had sought for in all their pilgrimages. Here they heard voices from out of the city—loud voices, saying, 'Say ye to the daughters of Zion,

Behold, thy salvation cometh! Behold, His reward is with Him !'

"Now as they walked in this land, they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the kingdom to which they were bound; and, drawing near to the city, they had yet a more perfect view thereof. It was builded of pearls and precious stones, also the streets thereof were paved with gold; so that, by reason of the natural glory of the city, and the reflection of the sunbeams upon it, Christian with desire fell sick; Hopeful also had a fit or two of the same disease; wherefore, here they lay by it a while, crying out, because of their pangs, 'If you see my beloved, tell Him that I am sick of love.'"

WALKING WITH GOD.

If the idea of "walking with God" had not occurred in the Scriptures, it seems as though it never could have otherwise entered into the mind of man. "It is a word," says Richard Baxter, "that importeth so high and holy a frame of soul, and expresseth such high and holy actions, that the naming of it striketh my heart with reverence, as if I had heard the voice to Moses, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'"

In speaking of the *honour* of walking with God, he says: "Methinks he that shall say to me, 'Come, see a man that walks with God,' doth call me to see one that is next unto an angel or glorified soul. It is a far more reverend object in mine eye than ten thousand lords or princes, considered only in their fleshly glory. It is a wiser action for people to run and crowd together to see a man that walks with God, than to see the pompous train of princes, their entertainments, or their triumphs."

CHRIST OUR JUDGE.

Delightful thought! that He who is our Saviour, our Mediator, our Brother, our Friend, will be our Judge! Oh what kindness, love, mercy, and affection, will combine with justice,

in the judgment which He shall pass upon us! We may safely leave our destinies in His hand. He will judge *righteously*, as He saves mercifully. He will not judge us as men do, nor will He judge us as we judge ourselves. We often condemn ourselves, and think we never shall reach the kingdom: but He will say unto us, if faithful, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Men may revile and persecute us, but He will smile with approbation, and give to us our "great reward," which is in heaven.

EXPECTING ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

Assuming that your prayers are such as are acceptable to God through Christ, you have every right to expect that they will be answered. You have the *promises* on your side; and these are numerous and reliable. Take one or two. "All things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." In these two you have examples of the nature of the promises in regard to prayer being answered. You have *the mediation of Jesus Christ*. He ever liveth to make intercession for you. He is the Angel of the Covenant before the throne, taking your prayer and waving them as incense before God. You have the Spirit to *intercede within you*. He maketh intercession within you, according to the will of God. You have *the character of your Father*, to whom you direct your prayers. He is truthful to His word; He is loving and kind to His children; He is almighty in power; He is infinitely rich in the possession of all things; He is wise to know how and when to give His blessings; He is generous beyond all thought; He is willing to do all that He has said; He is unchangeable and impartial, the same to you as to all who call upon Him. Place all these considerations together, and say whether you have not an unfailing ground on which to rest your expectations of answers to your prayers? A child could not expect more

confidently from its father, nor a subject from its sovereign, than you can from God. Do not, then, yield to doubt, or give way to discouragement. If you have not answers in the way you think you ought to have, this may be the very thing that arrests them. Expect with all the peace, patience, faith, joy, and praise, which the forementioned thoughts are calculated to create and sustain within you. Let this be your confidence, *that whatsoever you ask of Him, you receive.* This is exactly according to the promise.

DIVINE SYMPATHY.

"When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path."

My God, whose gracious pity I may claim,
 Calling Thee 'Father,' sweet, endearing name;
 The sufferings of this weak and weary frame,
 All, all are known to Thee.

From human eyes 'tis better to conceal
 Much that I suffer, much I hourly feel;
 But oh! this thought does tranquillise and heal,—
 All, all is known to Thee.

Nor will the bitter draught distasteful prove,
 While I recall the Son of Thy dear love;
 The cup Thou wouldst not, for our sakes, remove,
 That cup He drank for me.

And welcome, precious, can His Spirit make
 My little drop of suffering for His sake.
 Father, the cup I drink, the path I take,
 All, all is known to Thee."

CHAPTER XIV.

(Fourteenth Meeting.)

WILLINGNESS OF GOD TO SAVE.

IF you are penitent for sin, and desiring the forgiving mercy of God, be assured that He is as willing as He is able to save you, and to do it *now*. Why should you doubt His willingness to do that which He has promised, that which is His delight, that for which the Saviour suffered, that which gives angels joy, which fulfils His own purposes, and which makes His creatures happy? Page after page of the Bible reveals Him unto you as WILLING TO SAVE. Every angel and saint in heaven, every justified believer on earth, every merciful dispensation of His providence, and ten thousand other things in nature and grace, declare Him willing to save you. "See the loving Saviour anxious to melt hard and stony hearts, weeping over the impenitent, speaking tenderly to the guilty, the polluted, the vile—giving up His precious life to ransom souls from destruction—grasping in His latest hour a victim from the power of the enemy, to bear it as a trophy of the victory of redeeming love; and who shall dare to say there is unwillingness on the part of God to forgive? Hear these words: 'Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us,—He will subdue our iniquities, and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.' And then remember that the Saviour was sent 'to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'" Let these gracious truths

disperse your doubts, and *now* believe "with the heart unto righteousness."

OPPOSITION OF THE WORLD.

You must expect while you are in the world that it will oppose you in your Christian faith and practice. Jesus has taught you, "If ye were of the world," in its spirit, ways, and pursuits, the world would love you ; but because you are not of the world, but of Christ, "therefore the world hateth you." No marvel at this either, for He says, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." In being hated of the world, therefore, you have an evidence that you are a follower of Christ. It is one of the signs of your discipleship. "If ye were not strangers here," says Samuel Rutherford, "the dogs of the world would not bark at you (2 Cor. vi, 8). Ye shall see all the windings and turnings that are in your way to heaven, out of God's Word ; for He will not lead you to the kingdom at the nearest, but you must go through 'honour and dishonour ; by evil report and good report ; as deceivers, and yet true ; as unknown, and yet well known ; as dying, and behold we live ; as chastened, and not killed ; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing.' The world is one of the enemies that we have to fight with, but a vanquished and overcome enemy, and like a beaten and forlorn soldier, for our Jesus hath taken the armour from it. Let me, then, speak to you in His words, 'Be of good courage,' saith the Captain of our salvation, 'for I have overcome the world.' Ye shall neither be free of the scourge of the tongue, nor of disgraces, even if it were buffeting and spittings upon the face, as was our Saviour's case, if ye follow Christ."

You will be a greater gainer by having the opposition of the world on account of your religion, than you would by having the patronage of the world in your conformity to its spirit and life. The friendship of the world is enmity to God, and enmity to God is *death*. Whereas it is thankworthy and acceptable to God "if a man for conscience toward God endure grief,

suffering wrongfully." In this case you have the benediction of the Saviour, and hereafter "great is your reward in heaven."

SEEKING HOLINESS.

"Many persons think they are seeking holiness when they are in fact seeking the 'loaves and fishes.' To be holy is to be like Christ, who, as the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect *through suffering*. We must be willing to bear the Cross, if we would wear the crown. In seeking holiness, therefore, let us think little of joy, but much of purity; little of ourselves, but much of God; little of our own wills, but much of the Divine will. We will choose the deepest poverty and affliction with the will of God, rather than all earthly goods and prosperities without it. It is God we seek, and not happiness. If we have God He will not fail to take care of us. If we abide in Him, even a residence in hell could not harm us. 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.'"

SECURITY OF CHRISTIANS.

As to your falling, or forsaking Christ, or being overcome by your enemies, you never need entertain such a thought in the mind so long as you walk with God and cherish the love of the Saviour in your heart. The Holy Ghost has said you shall never fall, "if ye do these things." Hear again this triumphant language by St. Paul—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?—shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, NOR ANY OTHER CREATURE, shall

be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii, 35—39).

THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH.

The true source of spiritual strength is the HOLY GHOST. The Apostle Paul teaches this in his prayer for the Ephesians: "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His SPIRIT in the inner man." He teaches the same truth in his Epistle to the Romans: "Likewise the SPIRIT also helpeth our infirmities." We may have a strong body, strong intellectual knowledge, strong moral principles in the affairs of life; but in the absence of the Holy Spirit, we are wanting in power to understand, to realise, to delight in, and to follow after, spiritual things. On the other hand, there may be the absence of the strong body and the strong intellect; but by the indwelling of the blessed Spirit, there may be a strength adequate for all things required to be believed and to be practised in the Divine life. "I can," says St. Paul, "do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

Is the Holy Spirit the source of spiritual strength? then let us ever ask Him to abide in us and with us; let us look to Him and depend upon Him. Let us honour His presence and give Him glory. While we do not hold lightly intellectual strength, or bodily strength, or moral strength, let us covet *spiritual strength from the Holy Ghost, as THE PRE-EMINENT AND ESSENTIAL GOOD.*

"Plenteous of Grace, descend from high,
Rich in Thy sevenfold energy!
Thou strength of His almighty hand,
Whose power does heaven and earth command,
Refine and purge our earthly parts,
And stamp Thine image on our hearts."

FAITH OF THE NEW CONVERT.

You must not expect, as one just born into the household of God, that your faith will be equal to the faith of those who are young men or fathers in Christ. If you had a faith like this, would it not be disproportionate to your age and abilities? As you are only a "new-born babe," you must expect your faith to correspond with your age and strength. Nevertheless, for your comfort, bear in mind that your faith, though small, is as much faith as that of the "father or young man." Your hand of faith reached out can grasp the things of God the same as that of an older Christian, though you may not grasp as comprehensively or as firmly. As a babe you are as precious to your Father as those who by reason of years' experience have attained to a higher life. If possible, He watches you with a tenderer heart, guards you with a gentler hand, and blesses you with kindlier favours. Let your faith, though weak and small, take hold of the hand of your Father, and He will take hold of you; and thus, in filial affection and paternal love blending, you shall go on your way, growing stronger, and wiser, and holier as you advance. Lest you should think that it is your hand holding the Divine that preserves you in the way, let me suggest that it is not so much that as it is the Father's hand holding yours. Do not withdraw yours through unbelief or self-confidence. By faith keep it stretched out to Him, and He will never let go His hold of you. And while His power, and wisdom, and love, shall abide ever the same, your hand and hold shall expand and strengthen; your views shall widen; your experience shall enlarge. From the infant you shall go on to the man. From the recruit you shall become the disciplined soldier. From the milk of the Word you shall come to the strong meat; from first principles to perfection; and from the starting-point to the goal.

DOING IN RELIGION.

If you take the Scriptures as your guide in religion, you must see that they make *doing* one of its most essential characteristics. "The Scriptures," says Dr. Jenkyn, "never teach us how to enjoy, but how to *act*; the enjoyment which they teach is either complacency in well-doing for its own sake, or peace and joy under difficulties and persecutions for doing good. Many have a morbid dread of the religion of *DOING*: there is something poetical in the religion of feeling, and something magisterial in the religion of creeds; but in the religion of doing there is nothing, in their apprehension, but self-denial, painful struggle, strenuous effort, and untiring labour. According to their own phraseology, 'Do, do,' is to them anti-scriptural and legal; it is 'the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that hear entreat that the Word should not be spoken to them any more.' It is not, say they, the Gospel. Yet Jesus Christ, in the sermon with which He introduced the Gospel, asks His disciples, 'What do ye more than others?' The first question in evangelical religion is, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' or, 'What must I do to be saved?' The spiritual brethren of our Lord are they who hear the Word of God, and do it. The religion which shall be owned and approved in the day of judgment will be, not the cold and lifeless orthodoxy of those who say, 'Lord, Lord!' but the practical usefulness of those who do the will of their Father who is in heaven. The law and the Gospel say, Do and act; the doctrines and the promises incite us to activity; the history and examples of the Bible animate us to effort; the life and parables of Christ make us blush at our indolence; while the letters and the injunctions of the apostles insist that 'we should not sleep as do others,' while we have a world to save."

"Son, go *WORK* in My vineyard." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." "He that *DOETH* the will of God abideth for ever."

AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER.

O how comforting it is to the Christian, who has through ignorance, or inadvertency, or infirmity, fallen into sin, to call to mind those words of St. John, "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." As the High Priest stood in the Temple to take the offering of the Jew who had sinned, and to present it to God, and to receive the communication from Him to make unto the transgressor ; so Jesus Christ stands in the Temple of the skies to present Himself as the Sacrificial Victim for your sin, and the propitiation for the same ; and having received assurance of your forgiveness, He sends forth His Spirit into your heart, crying, "Abba, Father." Here, then, is sure and satisfactory pardon through Jesus for your sin. Look up, then, thou who hast committed sin, and art condemning thyself for having fallen into the snare of the devil. Jesus atones for thy sin ; He secures thy reconciliation with God ; He heals the sore thou hast made ; fills up the breach opened ; washes away the pollution contracted, and restores unto you the assurance of faith. Believe this glorious truth. Let thy soul cling to it as the drowning man to the rope thrown to him ; as the diseased man relies upon the skill of his physician ; as the client depends upon the judgment, knowledge, and ability of his lawyer ; as the man escaping from fire rests upon the shoulders of him that comes to his rescue ; as the child leaves its affair with the mother to plead with the father. Thus give up your case into the hands of your righteous Advocate, even Jesus ; and believe with all the heart that He prevails with the Father for you.

" He ever lives above,
For me to intercede ;
His all-redeeming love,
His precious blood to plead ;
His blood atoned for all our race,
And sprinkles now the throne of grace.

Five bleeding wounds He bears,
 Received on Calvary ;
 They pour effectual prayer,
 They strongly speak for me :—
 Forgive him, O forgive, they cry,
 Nor let that ransom'd sinner die."

PRAYER AN EVIDENCE OF LOVE.

It is a striking remark, ascribed to St. Augustine, that *prayer is the measure of love*—a remark which implies that those who love much will pray much, and that those who pray much will love much. This remark is not more scripturally than philosophically true. It is the nature of love to lead the person who exercises this passion, as it were, out of himself. His heart is continually attracted towards the beloved object. He naturally and necessarily exercises, in connection with the object of love, the communion of the affections. And this, it will be readily seen—viz., the communion of the affections—is the essential characteristic ; and perhaps it may be said, the essence and sum of prayer. In acceptable prayer the soul goes forth to God in various acts of adoration, supplication, and thanksgiving ; all of which imply feelings of trust and confidence, and particularly love to Him who is the object of prayer. Accordingly, he who loves much cannot help loving much. And on the other hand, when the streams of holy communion with God fail in any considerable degree, it is a sure sign that there is a shallowness and drought in that fountain of love from which they have their source.

Upham.

HEAVENLY MINDEDNESS.

Those who are going to heaven ought to be like travellers on their way to a much desired country : their minds should go before them, and acquire all the knowledge they can of it ; they should centre their affections upon it, talk about it, cast off all

hindrances in their way to it, and become as much conformed to it in spirit, as they can, while sojourners towards it. "Nothing more unbecomes a heavenly hope," says Gurnall, "than an earthly *heart*. You would think it an unseemly thing to see some rich man, that hath a vast estate, among the poor gleaners in harvest time, as busy to pick up the ears of corn that are left in the field, as the most miserable beggar in the company. Oh, how all the world would cry shame of such a sordid-spirited man! Well, Christian, be not angry if I tell thee that thou doest a more shameful thing thyself by far, if thou, that pretendest to hope for heaven, beest as eager in the pursuit of this world's trash as the poor carnal wretch is who expects no portion but what God hath given him to pick up in the field of this world."

It is said that the sainted JOHN HOWE at one time possessed so much of heaven in his mind, that he said to his wife, "Though I think I love you as well as it is fit for one creature to love another, yet if it were put to my choice whether to die this moment, or live through this night, and living this night would secure the continuance of life for seven years longer, I would choose to die this moment."

Such was the heavenly mindedness of the Psalmist that he said, "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee, Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee?" (Ps. lxxiii. 23—26). St. Paul's mind was so much in heaven, that he desired to depart (Phil. i. 21, 23).

We are exhorted to have our "conversation in heaven" (Phil. i, 27), to set our "affection on things above" (Col. iii, 2). To be heavenly minded is life and peace (Rom. viii, 6).

"How happy every child of grace
Who knows his sins forgiven.
This earth, he cries, is not my place,
I seek my place in heaven."

CHRIST'S INVITATION.

With tearful eyes I look around ;
Life seems a dark and stormy sea ;
Yet midst the gloom I hear a sound,
A heavenly whisper, Come to Me !

It tells me of a place of rest ;
It tells me where my soul may flee :
Oh ! to the weary, faint, opprest,
How sweet the bidding, Come to Me !

When the poor heart with anguish learns
That earthly props resign'd must be,
And from each broken cistern turns,
It hears the accents, Come to Me !

When against sin I strive in vain,
And cannot from its yoke get free,
Sinking beneath the heavy chain,
The words arrest me, Come to Me !

When nature shudders, loth to part
From all I love, enjoy, and see ;
When a faint chill steals o'er my heart,
A sweet voice utters, Come to Me !

Come, for all else must fail and die ;
Earth is no resting-place for thee ;
Heavenward direct thy weeping eye :
I am thy portion, Come to Me !

O voice of mercy, voice of love !
In conflict, grief, and agony,
Support me, cheer me from above,
And gently whisper, Come to Me !

Hugh White.

CHAPTER XV.

(Fifteenth Meeting.)

DOUBTS.

ALTHOUGH doubts are not to be coveted by the Christian, or, if possessed, to be cherished and encouraged, yet if he is the subject of them, he should endeavour to make the best use of them. And there is a best use to be made of them by the Christian as well as by the philosopher. Does the philosopher possess doubts, they lead him to further inquiries and researches for their dispersion in the increase of intellectual light. Does the tradesman possess doubts as to the correctness of his books or the soundness of his trade, or the trustworthiness of his customers, they incite him to a closer examination of his books, &c., so that he may, if possible, be satisfied one way or the other. So it should be with you, my Christian brother. If you doubt your acceptance with God, let the doubt lead you to examine your evidence within, and thence arrive at a more satisfactory assurance. If you doubt that your prayers are prevalent with God, look into the nature of them, and the manner of presenting them; and so come to a clearer understanding upon that point. Pursue this course in regard to any doubt of which you may be the subject, and you will find that light will increase within you until you stand on the high hill of cloudless vision, where all is certainty and joy. If you foster your doubts they will strengthen and condemn you; but if you deal with them as enemies to be conquered, they will disappear and leave you sole possession of the field.

“The gale shall speed thee on thy way,
The lightning lend a helpful ray,
The dark more quickly bring the day.
Soon shall the storm be changed to calm,
The oar of toil to conqueror's palm,
The prayer of fear to rapture's psalm.”

A WAY OF SANCTIFICATION.

If you are seeking, my brother, to be sanctified, do not presume to prescribe a way to the Lord in which it shall be done. Humbly and joyfully submit to the way in which He may please to accomplish this work. Lie in His hands as clay in the hands of the potter—only too glad to have the work done by such a wise and glorious Workman. “If the Lord be pleased,” says John Fletcher, “to come softly to thy help; if He make an end of thy corruption, by helping thee gently to sink to unknown depths of meekness; if He drown the indwelling man of sin, by baptizing, by plunging him into an abyss of humility, do not find fault with the simplicity of His method, the plainness of His appearing, and the commonness of His prescription. Nature, like Naaman, is full of prejudices. She expects that Christ will come to make her clean with as much ado, pomp, and bustle, as the Syrian general looked for when he ‘was wroth,’ and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.’ Christ frequently goes a much plainer way to work, and by this means He disconcerts all our preconceived notions and schemes of deliverance. ‘Learn of Me to be meek and lowly of heart, and thou shalt find rest to thy soul.’ Instead, therefore, of going away from a plain Jesus in a rage, welcome Him in His lowest appearance, and be persuaded that He can as easily make an end of thy sin by gently coming in ‘a still small voice,’ as by rushing in upon thee in a ‘storm, a fire, or an earthquake.’”

SINNING AND REPENTING.

We should not move in a circle in this regard, but should enter through the strait gate, and go on our way until we pass into the country of eternal sinlessness and joy. To be sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning, is to remain in

religion like a man in a ship, while a head wind and a strong under-current drives him backwards to the point whence he started, and may perchance dash his vessel on the rocks, which will bring upon him sudden destruction. Can a man who one day builds at his house, and the next day pulls it down, ever get his house completed? Will that traveller who goes on his journey a few miles and then returns, and repeats this continually, ever reach the destination upon which he first fixed his mind? No more can you who, ever and anon, are repeating the commission of sin and the exercise of repentance,—having them act periodically one with the other; giving way now to some sin of the heart or life, repenting of it, promising amendment, obtaining forgiveness, and then no sooner joyous in the favour of God and His people, than you fall into the sin again. This course of religious life will never bring you to excellence, to stability, to usefulness, to confidence with your brethren, or to the reward of heaven. It is true that if you sin you should repent, and seek with all earnestness a quick pardon from God; but you should not repeat the sin. Having been cancelled it should never appear again. Once committed and forgiven, it should only exist in the recollection, and never more be *touched* by you. You should become stronger and stronger every day in grace, and sin proportionably weaker and weaker. Instead of the tears of repentance for sins into which you have fallen, there should be tears of joy for increased conformity to Christ, and enlarged meetness for heaven. Unless you come out of the circle, you may finally be drifted into the yawning vortex of despair. The last thing you do may be the sin which besets you, without time or grace to repent; and so, after all your religious attempts, die without religion.

OMISSIONS IN PRAYER.

Let us often examine our prayers, to ascertain what parts we omit which ought to be in them. We are in danger of hurrying over our prayers, particularly our private and family,

so that some very essential part may be neglected by us. The devout McChesney thus speaks his experience upon this subject:—"There is a fearful tendency to omit *confession*, proceeding from low views of God and His law—slight views of my heart and the sins of my past life. This must be resisted. There is a constant tendency to omit *adoration*, when I forget to whom I am speaking—when I rush heedlessly into the presence of Jehovah, without remembering His awful name and character—when I have little eyesight for His glory, and little admiration of His wonders. I have the native tendency of the heart to omit *giving of thanks*, and yet it is specially commanded (Phil. iv, 6). Often when the heart is selfish—dead to the salvation of others—I omit *intercession*. And yet it especially is the Spirit of the Great Advocate who has the name of Israel always on His heart. Perhaps every prayer need not have all these; but surely a day should not pass without some space being devoted to each."

SUBMISSION.

A pious woman in sickness was once asked whether she was willing to live or die. She replied, "Which God pleaseth." "But if God were to refer it to you, which would you choose?" "I would refer it to Him again," was her answer. Like this woman, let us learn to refer everything to God, trusting His wisdom and goodness to order all things right.

A minister of Christ, when asked if he thought he was dying, said, "Really, friend, I care not whether I am or not; for if I die, I shall be with God; and if I live, God will be with me."

DISPOSITION TO MURMUR.

Guard, my brother, against the disposition to murmur. It is an evil of our nature; and if left unchecked it will grow to a great power within us. It is to be feared that many Christians are afflicted with it. If you have it in any degree, watch it, and labour to subdue it. Consider well the *blessings* of life and

your undeservedness of any one of them, and you will see, I think, that your murmuring is without any reason. If you have affliction, has not health been *more* than affliction? If you have losses, have not gains been more than losses? If you have bereavements, are not those that are left more than those taken away? If you have enemies, are not they that are for you *more* than all that are against you? Besides, if you rightly look at the very things about which you murmur, you will find that they are blessings in themselves, or in their results. If "ALL things work together for good," then how can you with consistency murmur at any *one* thing? In this you murmur against your good. Instead of murmuring then, at anything, you ought to observe the apostolic injunction, and "in everything give thanks." In murmuring, you do what Israel did, and for which God sent them the fiery serpents as punishment; you tread in the steps of the worldling; you imitate Satan; you indulge in a sin which has properly been called a "mother sin." Pray for grace against it; and from a spirit of murmuring rise on earth to the life of angels,—*always love and praise.*

"Who would be God's, must trust, not see;
Not murmur, fear, demand:
Must *wholly* by Him guided be,
Lost in that loving hand:
Must turn where'er He leads, nor say,
'Whither, oh, whither, points the way?'"

NEARNESS OF GOD.

There can be no more certain fact than the nearness of God to us. He is as near as the light of mid-day with which we see, or as the very air we breathe, and in which we move. We must become annihilated to be absent from Him, or He must cease to be omnipresent to be absent from us. Let us have this fact deeply impressed upon our minds, and frequently, nay, always in our thoughts. It will be to us a means of great spiritual good in the Divine life. When you are exposed to any

danger He is near as a Deliverer to save you. When you are tempted of the devil He is near to succour and defend. When you are in trouble He is near to comfort. When you are in difficulty He is near to counsel. When you are in guilt He is near to pardon. In one word, there is no state, place, or relation of the Christian life but He is near to reveal Himself in that peculiar way most adapted to you. Remember He is near you as a *whole* God; near you in all the attributes and names of His being; near you in all the relationships in which He stands to His own people. As Richard Baxter says, "Thy friend may be absent, but God is never absent from thee. He is with thee when as to men thou art *alone*. The sun is sufficient to illuminate but one part of the earth at once, and, therefore, must leave the rest in darkness; but God is with thee night and day, and there is no night to the soul so far as it enjoyeth Him. Thy life, thy health, thy love and joy, are not nearer to thee than thy God. He is now before thee, about thee, within thee, moving thee to good, restraining thee from evil, marking and accepting all that is well, disliking and opposing all that is ill. He is as much at leisure to observe thee, to converse with thee, to hear and help thee, as if thou wert His only creature."

My brother, if you love God, and have confidence in Him, you should derive great consolation and encouragement from the nearness of God to you. Is the loving child happy, contented, fearless, while the loving parent is near? so should you, with your infinitely loving Father near you. This should assure you of triumph in conflict, sunlight in darkness, plenty in want, tranquillity in trouble, strength in duty, life in death.

BEREAVEMENT.

You have lately been called by Providence to bear affliction in the form of bereavement. God has taken from you one whom you dearly loved. As a necessary consequence you feel the event even to mourning. It is right that you should feel. God intended you to feel the infliction. If you had not felt it

you would have shown that you were neither humane nor Christian. But while it is right that you should feel the bereavement, and manifest your feelings, you must guard against the indulgence and manifestation of them in a way inconsistent with the character of God, and the nature of your religion. You are not to mourn as though there was no light in the cloud which has overshadowed you; as though there was no relief for the sorrow which has entered your soul; as though the event had happened by chance; as though your departed one had either sunk into oblivion or gone into endless misery; as though your heavenly Father was either dead, or unmindful of you, or had shut up all resources of consolation and support. If you mourn, do so in a way which will secure the blessedness of them that mourn; mourn with tears which you believe God Himself shall soon wipe away; mourn with feelings which shall produce stronger confidence in the goodness and wisdom of the Divine administration; mourn with a hope that you shall not only see the lost one again, but that even now He who has taken away will in a manner which shall be for the best more than supply the want which He has created. You do not mourn, surely, that the departed one has escaped from the cares, sorrows, labours and conflicts of life; nor do you mourn that he has gone to the "better country, that is, a heavenly;" nor do you mourn, I suppose, that he is so much happier and holier there than he would have been on earth. You would not, either, question the right of God to do as He has done. Whatever way you look at the event, in the light of Christianity and heaven, you have strong comfort in your sorrow, and rich compensation for your loss.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PRAYER.

It is a most encouraging thought that, to help our ignorance, weakness, and indisposition in prayer, our heavenly Father has appointed the blessed Spirit of wisdom, power, and love. Without Him our prayers are mere sounds and forms,

void of meaning or effect ; but with Him in our prayers, they are earnest, consistent, and prevalent. St. Paul teaches us, "Likewise THE SPIRIT ALSO HELPETH OUR INFIRMITIES, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but THE SPIRIT ITSELF MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. viii, 26, 27).

Again, the same apostle declares, that the Spirit is the only agent by whom we have access to God through Christ. "For through Him we both have access BY ONE SPIRIT unto the Father" (Eph. ii, 18).

St. Jude also exhorts us, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, PRAYING IN THE HOLY GHOST."

With such a Divine agent in us at the throne of grace, teaching us the object of prayer, the medium of prayer, the manner of prayer, the subjects of prayer, and making our prayers such as become us and Him to whom they are offered, how can we fail to secure the blessings which we need? Were the Holy Ghost more powerfully and generally present in our private, family, social and public prayers, oh, how much more pleasure should we feel in them! How would our coldness kindle into intense longing, our feebleness rise into Jacob-like-strength, our unbelief into all-realizing faith, our scanty blessings into showers which would yield a spring-time of beauty in grace; how would Zion rise from the sleep and dust of worldliness, and go forth strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!

MUTUAL FORGIVENESS.

Seeing that offences will come, as the Saviour teaches us, between brethren; and seeing that frequently these offences are to be attributed as much to the one side as the other, it requires that there be mutual concession, confession, amendment, and for-

giveness, in order to reconciliation. Or if there be confession and amendment on the one side, there must be forgiveness on the other.

The peace of the brethren at difference requires mutual forgiveness. They cannot carry a quiet mind with them while they are hostile to each other in feeling and affection.

The peace and prosperity of the Church call for it. One crack in the lute spoils its music, one discordant voice in the choir destroys the harmony of its singing: so one breach between two members of the Church, kept open, is a sore in the body of Christ. One little worm in the enfolded rose-bud will prevent its expansion in beauty and fragrance; so one living worm of discord will eat away much power from a church and prevent its growth and development in the beauties of holiness.

The consistency of religion claims it. Bickering, strife, division, are palpably contrary to the spirit of Christianity, which is love, unity, peace, kindness. Brethren, refusing to forgive each other is a spot, and a dark, deep one too, on the garment of religion. It is a disgrace to them who profess this religion. It is a grand occasion given to the enemy to blaspheme Christ and His cause.

The teachings of the Bible require it. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

The forgiveness of God and the acceptance of prayer depend upon this: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

We see, then, the plain course to pursue, if we are at variance as brethren in the Church. May we have grace from God to follow it!

MORNING DEVOTION.

When first thine eyes unveil, give thy soul leave
To do the like ; our bodies but forerun
The spirit's duty. True hearts spread and heave
Unto their God, as flowers to the sun.
Give Him thy first thoughts, then ; so shalt thou keep
Him company all day, and in Him sleep.

Yet never sleep the sun up. Prayer should
Dawn with the day. There are set, awful hours
'Twixt heaven and us. The manna was not good
After sun-rising ; for day sullies flowers ;
Rise to prevent the sun ; sleep doth sins glut,
And heaven's gate opens when this world's is shut.

Walk with thy fellow-creatures ; note the hush
And whispering amongst them. Not a spring
Or leaf but hath his morning hymn. Each bush
And oak doth know " I AM." Canst thou not sing ?
Oh ! leave thy cares and follies ; go this way,
And thou art sure to prosper all the day.

Serve God before the world ; let Him not go
Until thou hast a blessing ; then resign
The whole unto Him ; and remember who
Prevailed by wrestling ere the sun did shine.
Wouldst thou be blessed ? thy sins and follies weep,
Then, journeying on, an eye to heaven keep.

When the world's up, and every swarm abroad,
Keep then thy temper ; mix not with each clay ;
Despatch necessities. Life hath a load
Which must be carried on, and safely may.
Yet keep those cares without thee ; let thy heart
Be God's alone, and choose the better part.

Henry Vaughan.

CHAPTER XVI.

(Sixteenth Meeting.)

GLOBIFYING GOD.

Do you wish to glorify God? You were made for this. You were redeemed for this. You have been saved as a Christian for this. This should be the purpose and effort of your life in all things. If the heavens declare His glory; if the earth in its laws, flowers, fruits, and general operations, declare His glory, how much more should you, who are the highest piece of His workmanship, upon whom He has impressed His image in the character of your mind, and in whom He has implanted His nature by the renewing power of His grace? Do you desire to know *how* you may glorify God? I will tell you, in the language of John Smith: "We glorify God by entertaining the impression of His glory upon us, and not by communicating any kind of glory to Him. We best glorify Him when we grow most like Him; and we then act most for His glory when a true spirit of sanctity, justice, and meekness, runs through all our actions; when we so live as becomes those that converse with the great mind and wisdom of the whole world; with that Almighty Spirit that made, supports, and governs all things; with that Being from whence all good flows, and in which there is no spot, stain, or shadow of evil; and so, being captivated and overcome by the sense of Divine loveliness and goodness, endeavour to be like Him, and to conform ourselves, as much as we may be, unto Him. As God's seeking His own glory in respect of us is most properly the flowing forth of His goodness upon us; so our seeking the glory of God is most properly our endeavouring a participation of His goodness, and an earnest, incessant pursuing after the Divine perfection. When God becomes so great in our eyes, and all created things so little, that we reckon nothing as

worthy of our aims and ambition, but a serious participation of the Divine nature, and the exercises of Divine virtues, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, and the like ; when the soul, beholding the infinite beauty and loveliness of the Divinity, and then looking down and beholding all created perfection mantled over with darkness, is ravished into love and admiration of that never-setting brightness, and endeavours after the greatest resemblance of God, in justice, love, and goodness ; when conversing with Him by a secret feeling of the virtue, sweetness, and power of His goodness, we endeavour to assimilate ourselves to Him, then we may be said to glorify Him indeed."

PROPORTIONATE STRENGTH.

"As thy day, so shall thy strength be." This is the promise of God to you, my brother. There is great wisdom in it, as well as great kindness. Perhaps this promise is the one which you especially need at this time. You feel that you have strength for the present ; but you are fearful of the future. You see something in the days beyond for which you are sure your present strength is not adequate. You see rising in the heavens a dark, foreboding cloud, which you fear to meet. There is a steep hill which stands in the way a little farther on. Yonder is a host of enemies which you are sure will conquer you. That loss of your property, or your child, or your wife, you tremble to think of. Is this something like the working of your mind in regard to the future ? If so, then, first, it may be well for you to ascertain how much of these things are mere fancies arising from weak faith and strong doubts. Have you the power to know *for certain* future events ? Have you entered into the cabinet of the Almighty and read His plans concerning you ? But suppose everything you fear shall turn to a reality, under the direction of Divine wisdom and love ; it does not behove you to bear them before they come. You may prepare for them, *thus far*, by living up to duty and privilege *in the present*. Gather peace and assur-

ance from the word, "*As thy day, so shall thy strength be.*" All the days of your life are God's. Each one as it comes, comes by His permission. Each thing and all things in the day are there, not by chance, but by Divine arrangement. Let, then, to-morrow come; let the next day come; let any day of your future life in this world come, and bring with it more than any previous day, more than you had ever feared, more than this day's strength could possibly sustain, with *that* day and all its associations, God will give you strength in proportion. With every thorn there shall come a rose; with every cloud a sun; with every enemy a Friend; with every temptation a Deliverer. Oh, cannot you trust the word of the Lord? HE IS FAITHFUL WHO HAS PROMISED. He *will* do as He has said.

A WILL TO WORK.

A Russian traveller, who witnessed the diligence of Lavater in study, visiting the sick, and relieving the poor, inquired of him, "Whence have you so much strength of mind and power of endurance?" "My friend," replied he, "man rarely wants the power to work when he possesses the will; the more I labour in the discharge of my duties, so much the more ability and inclination to labour do I constantly find within myself." The reason why we have so little work done for Christ is the absence of the *will*. Were the fact seen by us as it is by God, should we not perceive that the bulk of excuses from work in the vineyard of the Lord, rest upon an *unwillingness*? Many who say that they have no time, or no talent, or no opportunity, find enough of each to work for the promotion of their own personal purposes. How is this? In the one instance there is the *will*; in the other the will is wanting. "MAN RARELY WANTS THE POWER TO WORK WHEN HE POSSESSES THE WILL."

THE TONGUE.

If you find this member of the body likely to be a hindrance

to your growth in grace, it is your duty to exercise a close vigilance over it. Many of God's people have brought grief into their souls and reproach upon religion by an undue liberty of the tongue. Think of Peter; of David; of Saul; of Moses; of Jacob, &c. You live or die, in the religious life, according to the use you make of the tongue: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." It is, when piously used, a means of mutual Christian edification: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Government of the tongue is an evidence of the possession of religion: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION.

Perfection is the Gospel mark set before us as Christians. It is the end of Christianity, as well as the end of nature. The sun shines, the clouds rise and float, the dew falls, the rain descends, and all the laws of the physical creation operate to bring on the living creatures from the seed, through the various stages of growth, unto perfection. So, in Christianity, the Spirit works within us; the Saviour pleads in heaven for us, the Word is inspired and given to us; the blessings of grace are bestowed upon us, and all the laws of the kingdom of the Son operate, with a view of leading us on from the "principles of the doctrine of Christ unto perfection." The sculptor saws, chisels, and gives most minute attention to that piece of snow-white marble, in order to bring out of it a figure which shall bear perfection upon it. So should we, by the help which Christianity affords, go on in fashioning our hearts in their affections, motives, desires, and purposes, until they are "perfect in Christ Jesus." The painter commences with outlines upon the canvas; but having defined in his own soul what it is he wishes to realise, he proceeds with all care in the

use of his skill and colours, until the picture is perfect, according to his ability. So we, having a distinct understanding of the Likeness we have to imitate, should go on in the use of Divine influences, until we are perfectly like the copy, according to the capability we possess. The builder first begins in the foundation, and then adds stone after stone, applying the line, the level, the square, until the top stone is brought on, and nothing more can be added. So we, having begun our work of salvation by faith upon Christ Jesus, are to add to our faith "virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity."

If we stop short of the ultimate end of religion (perfection), we are like trees, or flowers, or men, not full-grown. We fail to serve the purposes of our new creation: we are imperfect, stunted specimens of the grace of God. "Let us, therefore, GO ON UNTO PERFECTION."

THE PORTION OF SAINTS.

"When the Lord speaketh of Himself with regard to His people," says Bishop Beveridge, "He saith, *I am*. He doth not say, I am their light, their life, their guide, their tower, or their strength; but only *I AM*. He sets His hands as it were to a blank, that His people might write under it what they please that is for their good. As if He should say, Are they weak? I am strength. Are they sick? I am health. Are they in trouble? I am comfort. Are they poor? I am riches. Are they dying? I am life. Have they nothing? I am all things. I am justice and mercy; I am grace and goodness; I am glory, beauty, holiness, eminency, supremacy, perfection, all-sufficiency, eternity, Jehovah—I am whatsoever is suitable to their nature, or convenient for them in their several conditions. I am whatsoever is amiable in itself, or desirable to their souls. Whatsoever is pure and holy, whatsoever is great and pleasant, whatsoever is good and needful to make them happy, that I

am. So that, in short, God here represents Himself unto us as our universal good, and leaves us to make the application to ourselves according to our several wants, capacities, and desires, by saying only in general, I AM."

COMPLAINING.

"Wherefore should a living man complain?" is a question proposed in the Bible. Looking at man in his relations to God and the dealings of God with him, it would be very difficult to find a single justifiable reason for his complaining. The things which he thinks are reasons for his complaining, exist not in the method of the Divine treatment of him or in the treatment itself. They exist in his own morbid imagination. They are in *him*, not in God; and as a proof of this, it may only be stated that, the more a man knows of God and His ways, and the nearer he approaches to God in the spirit of his mind and the order of his life, the less he complains of the Divine conduct: so that when he attains to full conformity to Him in heaven he no more complains; and not only so, but he sees his error in every instance of life-complaining, and joins in with the loud acclaim of glorified spirits, "He hath done all things well."

Complaining is most unseemly in a Christian. How should *he* complain, when he considers all he has, and is, and hopes to be, through the infinite merit of the Cross? Did he observe the apostolic advice or even imitate the Psalmist, he would find no opportunity of complaining. "Rejoice *evermore*. In *everything* give thanks," is the exhortation of St. Paul. "I will bless the Lord at *all times*, His praise shall be *continually* in my mouth," is the resolution and practice of the Psalmist.

Complaining is productive of great spiritual mischief. "It makes a man fight against God with his own weapons," says Thomas Brooks; "it makes a man cast all the cordials of the spirit against the wall, as things of no value; it makes a man suck poison out of the sweetest promises; it makes a man

eminent in nothing, unless it be in having hard thoughts of God, in arguing against his own soul and happiness, and in turning his greatest advantages into disadvantages, his greatest helps into his greatest hindrances." There is no profit in complaining, but great loss. Let us, then, guard against it, pray against it, labour against it. Let us live in the Eden of praise, rather than in the purgatory of complaint. Let us love, and give thanks, rather than hang our harps on the willows.

AGAINST FEAR OF EVIL.

"O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee. Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isa. liv, 6—17; xliii, 1—3).

NEARER HEAVEN.

Mr. Venn, in one of his excursions to preach for the Countess of Huntingdon, while riding on the road, fell into company with a person who had the appearance of a clergyman. After riding together for some time, conversing on different subjects, the stranger, looking in his face, said, "Sir, I think you are on the wrong side of fifty." "On the wrong side of fifty?" answered Mr. Venn, "No, sir, I am on the right side of fifty." "Surely," the clergyman replied, "you must be turned of fifty." "Yes, sir," added Mr. Venn, "but I am on the right side of fifty, for I am nearer my crown of glory." How delightful it is to see the Christian, as he advances towards the tomb, not mourn that his life is getting shorter, but rejoice that now

his salvation is nearer than when he believed. It is only when the "crown of glory" is in view that a man, like Mr. Venn, considers himself on the right side, when he is nearer his death than his birth. Aged Christian, put on courage; renew thy race. A few more steps, and the pilgrimage shall be over. Thou art the right side of fifty because nearer the end of thy journey, and nearer the city of the living God.

THE CHRISTIAN A SOLDIER OF CHRIST.

You have espoused Christ and His cause by faith and covenant; and now you are bound by the most sacred obligations to be faithful. In the maintenance of His kingdom, you must not yield to difficulties; "Thou, therefore, ENDURE HARDNESS, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." You must also be free from all things that would encumber you in the discharge of your duties. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. ii, 3, 4). As a soldier of Christ, you have to fight for the FAITH which He has given to you in your own heart, in the Scriptures, and in the Church; contending earnestly for the faith "which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (2 Tim. vi, 12). The enemies who seek to rob you of your faith are not only false teachers in the Church, and deceivable workers in the world, but crowds of invisible mighty powers: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood," that is, against these *only*, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. vi, 12). In opposing these formidable foes, stand with your armour always on. Resist in the strength of faith, prayer, righteousness, truth, fidelity, perseverance. Look every moment to the Captain of your salvation: "Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me" (Ps. xxxv, 1). Rest on the promise, "When the enemy shall come in like a

flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him " (Isa. lix, 19). Remember, you are fighting for your SOUL, for Christ, for heaven.

"Onward, then, in battle move!
More than conqu'ror ye shall prove:
Though opposed by many a foe,
Christian soldier, onward go!"

THE PROMISE OF SALVATION.

As a penitent desiring salvation, you have the promise of it in the Scriptures. The promise must be believed as well as the promise-Giver; but it is important for you to acquire correct views of the relation of the promise to Him that gives it, and the way in which you are to exercise faith in each respectively. The promise of salvation is not the *primary* object of faith, but the *secondary*; or it is rather the means by which we believe, than the thing on which we are to rest. As in the Lord's Supper, the elements of bread and wine are the outward signs to bring Christ and the believer together; so the promise of salvation is the instrument of bringing Christ and the soul together; it is the *warrant* by which faith is encouraged to come to Christ and rest upon Him. The union which faith makes is not between the believing penitent and the promise, but between him and his Saviour. It is not the promise which he believes that saves him, but Christ, to whom the believed promise is the means of bringing him. Saving faith is Scripturally described, not as receiving the promise, but as receiving Christ; as believing Christ; as coming to Christ. As you could not come to Him without a promise, so you must not rest in the promise, but exclusively in Christ. The promise is the *field*, and Christ the hidden *pearl*, which you are to search for, and finding, give up everything in order to keep: it is the *golden candlestick*, and He is both the *olive-tree* which drops fatness into it, and the *light* which shines in it; and it is the light you want to guide you

into the way of life: it is the *alabaster box*, and Christ is the precious *spikenard* therein, sending forth the beautiful fragrance; and it is the mollifying, healing ointment which you want to soothe and comfort your wounded spirit: it is the *golden pot*, and Christ is the *manna* treasured up in it, and it is the manna you want to satisfy your hungry soul.

Here, then, you see the relation of the promise of salvation to Him who gives it; and how you are to believe the one and the other. Take the promise and rely upon it as a *means* of bringing you to Christ; but rely upon CHRIST for salvation.

CONSECRATION TO GOD.

O God, what offering shall I give
 To Thee, the Lord of earth and skies?
 My spirit, soul, and flesh receive,
 A holy, living sacrifice;
 Small as it is, 'tis all my store;
 More shouldst Thou have if I had more.
 Now then, my God, Thou hast my soul;
 No longer mine, but Thine I am;
 Guard Thou Thine own, possess it whole;
 Cheer it with hope, with love inflame:
 Thou hast my spirit; there display
 Thy glory to the perfect day.
 Thou hast my flesh, Thy hallowed shrine,
 Devoted solely to Thy will;
 There let Thy light for ever shine;
 This house let all Thy presence fill;
 O Source of life,—live, dwell, and move
 In me, till all my life be love!
 Send down Thy likeness from above,
 And let this my adorning be;
 Clothe me with wisdom, patience, love,
 With lowliness and purity!

Than gold and pearls more precious far,
And brighter than the morning star.

Lord, arm me with Thy Spirit's might,
Since I am call'd by Thy great name ;
In Thee let all my thoughts unite,
Of all my works be Thou my aim ;
Thy love attend me all my days,
And my sole business be Thy praise !

C. Wesley.

CHAPTER XVII.

(*Seventeenth Meeting.*)

PRAYER AND ACTION.

PRAYER is a duty which needs no words to prove obligatory at present ; but let us remember that *action* also is a duty, without which, providing we are in circumstances to act, prayer is of little avail with God. When the children of Israel came unto the Red Sea, and difficulties stood before them, they began to complain of Moses taking them from Egypt ; then Moses cried unto the Lord for help, and the Lord, knowing that He Himself was their help in every time of trial, said unto Moses, " Wherefore criest thou unto Me ? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward " (Exod. xiv, 15). However important prayer was for Moses and the Israelites at other times, *action* was the imperative duty *now*. Pharaoh behind them, coming with his hosts to seize them, and either carry them back or destroy them on the spot, required prompt *action*. It was not prayer and safety now, but *action* and safety. " Go forward ! " here was their victory. *We* may sometimes be in circumstances when work is more necessary to us than prayer ; when the Almighty Himself may even give back our prayers to us, and command us rather to *act*.

If by previous prayer we have formed alliance with Him, and He has given evidence of His union with us, our great duty is to avail ourselves of His help in the *work* of the Christian life. Are we pursued by our foes, and do we anticipate difficulties, and are we beset on either side with impassable barriers? our duty is not to be crying unto the Lord, but to go forward in the strength of the Lord, given in answer to previous prayer; and we shall find, as the Israelites, that the sea shall be divided and our enemies shall perish. Prayer is good, but prayer *and* action are better. The great demand which the world and God now make of each Christian is *action* in the things of personal religion and the spread of the Gospel. We pray, but do not act. How many prayers are continually ascending to God without corresponding action. We mourn before Him over our doubts, our conflicts, our corruptions, the dearth of the Church, the wickedness of the world; but where are our *efforts* against these things? Could we hear the Almighty speak to us, He would say, "Wherefore cry you unto Me; am I not your God? have I not given you My promise? What means your deliverance from Egypt? What means the cloud of glory which overshadows you? Here are My signs. My command to you is, that you GO FORWARD."

SHOWING LOVE TO JESUS.

Let your love to the Saviour show itself in some outward deeds, the same as your love to any other object. Real love is not satisfied by being confined in silence to the heart. It must and will in some way give tokens of itself to the object on which it is fixed. Sincere love to Jesus is the first to show itself. If it cannot sound the trumpet of fame, or bestow the gift of wealth, or do the deed of heroism, or exercise the talent of highest degree, it will do what it can, and in doing that, evince to Jesus its depth and ardour as much to His satisfaction as though it had accomplished the greatest works. A little child with a smile of the countenance lighting upon the father's eye, or the offering of a violet to the father's hand,

may show its love to him as much as the older child who does some great thing at the father's command. Show your love in the way which you can, the way which opens to you, and which accords with your ability; and you shall be accepted as a loving disciple by Jesus as truly as he whose name is on the wings of rumour as the first for benevolence and good deeds. Mary *loved much*, although she could *do no more* than break her alabaster box of ointment and anoint the way-worn feet of her blessed Lord, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. We know how *that* expression of love was accepted by Him, and what He said of it. The fragrance of the ointment as a material substance filled the room only; but the fragrance of the ointment as an offering of *much love* filled the Saviour's heart and the room of the Church ever since. And now, while the names and deeds of warriors, princes, great merchants, mighty statesmen, profound scholars, are lost in forgetfulness, the deed and name of Mary are inscribed on millions upon millions of pages, spoken of wherever the Gospel is preached; and exert an untold influence upon the spirit and life of myriads of the Saviour's followers.

My brother, show your love to Christ in the best way you can, and both act and motive shall be fragrant in His sight.

STANDING STILL IN RELIGION.

"We are always moving and lifting at the stone of corruption that lies upon our hearts, but yet we never stir it notwithstanding, or at least never roll it off from us. We are sometimes a little troubled with the guilt of our sins, and then we think we must thrust our lusts out of our hearts; but afterwards we sprinkle ourselves over with I know not what holy water, and so are contented to let them still abide quietly within us. We do every day truly confess the same sins, and pray against them; and yet still commit them as much as ever, and lie as deeply under the power of them. We have the same water to pump out in every prayer, and still we let the same leak in again upon us. We make a great deal of

noise, and raise a great deal of dust with our feet ; but we do not move forward at all ; or if we do sometimes make a little progress, we quickly lose again the ground which we had gained : like those upper planets in the heaven which (as the astronomer's tell us) sometimes move forwards, sometimes quite backwards, and sometimes perfectly stand still ; have their stations and retrogradations as well as their direct motion. As if religion were nothing else but advancing up and down upon the same piece of ground, and making several motions and friskings on it ; and not a sober journeying and travelling onwards towards some certain place. We do and undo ; we do *Penelopes telam texere* ; we weave sometimes a web of holiness, but then we let our lusts come and undo and unravel all again. Like Sisyphus in the fable, we roll up a mighty stone with much ado, sweating and tugging up the hill ; and then we let it go, and tumble down again unto the bottom : and this is our constant work. Like those *Danaides* which the poets speak of, we are always filling water into a sieve by our prayers, duties, and performances, which still runs out as fast as we pour in."—*Cudworth*.

BENEFITS OF PRAYER.

No one duty can be mentioned that will secure to you more benefits than prayer. "ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER, ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "If ye shall ask ANYTHING in my name, I will do it." "If you would be rich in all grace," says Leighton, "be much in prayer. Conversing with God assimilates the soul to Him, beautifies it with the beams of His holiness, as Moses' face shone when he returned from the mount. It is prayer that brings all our supplies from heaven, draws more grace out of God's hands, and subdues sin and the powers of darkness ; it entertains and augments our friendship with God, raiseth the soul from earth, and purifies it wonderfully. Their experience, that have any of this kind, teacheth them that, as they abate prayer, all their graces do sensibly weaken ; therefore when the apostle hath

suit a Christian with his whole armour, he adds to this all, 'Pray without ceasing;' for this arms both man and his armour with the strength and protection of God."

MUTUAL LOVE.

Nothing can be plainer in the example and teachings of Jesus Christ than the doctrines of mutual love among Christians. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one other; as I have loved you, that ye love one another" (John xiii, 34). What the Saviour here lays down, the apostles take up and repeat in their teachings. "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. iv, 9). "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Pet. iv, 8). "This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John iii, 11). "This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also" (1 John iv, 21).

DIFFERENCE IN THE WAYS OF CONVERSION.

If you conclude that your conversion is not genuine because it was not effected in the same way as others, you may commit a very great mistake, which may result in your spiritual injury. Conversion in its nature is the same everywhere and in every one; but the *means* or *ways* of conversion may materially differ. Light is the same in nature, but the mode of receiving it may vary. Wind is the same in nature, but it may blow in the refreshing breeze or tornado. Water is the same in nature; but it may come in the dew, the gentle rain, or the teeming shower. London is only one city; but a great variety of ways to it. So conversion. It is alike in its essential character, as a change wrought in the soul, from nature to grace; but in the *means* by which it is brought about there may be a wide disparity. The conversion of Lydia was very different in the

way of it, to the conversion of the jailer. The most important point for you to decide is—"Am I converted? Is there a change wrought in me? Do I *now* love Christ and His people? Does the Spirit *now* reign in me, and am I *now* on my way to heaven?" The chief thing with a man who has had his blindness removed is the fact that he *now sees*. Whether he received his sight gradually or in a moment is of secondary importance. He may, if he meet with one who has had his eyes opened, compare the methods together, but as to whether he sees or no, that will be unquestioned. Because his eyes were not opened in the same way as his friends, will he conclude that he does not see? A man who was almost dying of thirst, whose thirst has been quenched, does not doubt the fact because the water was brought him in a different way to what it was brought to others. So, my brother, if now the Saviour is precious from His indwelling in the heart, rejoice in the experience, and never for a moment doubt, because He did not choose to make His entrance precisely in the same manner in which He entered into the heart of your fellow-Christian.

EARNESTNESS IN RELIGION.

A man who is in earnest to obtain a just, honest, and necessary livelihood for himself and his family is commendable. He is fulfilling Scripture injunctions:—"Diligent in business," and "providing for his own." But to see this same man sleeping over his *religious* duties and obligations is indeed a sight censurable in the highest degree. If there are reasons for him to be in earnest in clothing, feeding, and protecting the body in the present, and providing for it in the future, surely there are reasons equally numerous, powerful, and just for him to be as much in earnest for his soul. Shall a man have a treasure in this world for that which perisheth, and not have a treasure in heaven, for that which endureth evermore? Shall a man secure, as far as possible, his body against disease, and his property against destruction, and not secure his immortal soul against the liabilities of sin and the risks of

eternal fire? Shall he rise up early, and retire late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for this life, so fleeting and uncertain, while he is absolutely or comparatively listless about the life which he knows is infinitely more important? To do this, shows the animal more than the *man*. It shows the earthliness and sordidness of the body, rather than the nobleness and grandeur of the spirit. It shows the narrowness and shortness of the mental vision, rather than that far-seeing sagacity of which man boasts as the possessor.

My brother, be *earnest* in your religion. The Bible is earnest in its instructions of you. God is in earnest in His love to you; Christ is in earnest in His prayers for you; the Spirit is in earnest in His operations within you: and will not *you* be in earnest for *yourself*, in the exercise of your faith, in the offering of your prayers, in the obedience of your life, in your efforts to do good, in your cultivation of the graces of the Christian character? Sin is in earnest to pollute you, Satan is in earnest to sift you as wheat, wicked men are in earnest to lead you astray; will not you be in earnest to resist even unto blood, if necessary? Shall life everywhere and in everything be in earnest, while your *religious life* is dormant? God forbid!

CONFORMITY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Our spirit as Christians should be conformed to the character of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. For instance, Is He a Spirit of love? our spirit should be permeated with the same. Is He a Spirit of zeal? our spirit ought to be inflamed with energy for the glory of God. Is He a Spirit of truth? our spirit should believe and practise the truth in all things. Is He a Spirit of holiness? our spirit should participate in purity in all its being. Is the Spirit a dove? our spirit should be harmless, placid, peaceful. Is He fire? our spirit should burn in pure emotions and seraph-like zeal for the welfare of Zion.

Thus should we receive from the Spirit His nature and

image. This would give to us a sublimity and power in the life of Christianity which would exhibit its excellencies in a light confounding to the world and honouring to God.

BELIEVERS, MEMBERS OF CHRIST.

"We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. v, 30).

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. xii, 4, 5).

"Now ye are the body of Christ; and members in particular" (1 Cor. xii, 27).

As members of Christ He prayed for them—"I in them and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me" (John xvii, 23).

As members of Christ let us be healthful, active, useful, holy, according to the life which He contains and imparts unto us. Let us be in subjection to Him, acting as He directs, suffering as He ordains, working as He commands.

TRIAL OF FAITH.

Faith is to us in religion what the foundation is to the building, what the shield is to the soldier, what the gold is to the jeweller. As the foundation is tried in its strength and durability by the structure that is erected upon it, so is our faith by the principles, graces, and practices which rest upon it. As the shield is tried in its power of resistance by the arrows or shot which may come against it, so our faith is tried by the "fiery darts of the wicked." As the gold is tried in its purity by the jeweller's fire, and tried in its adaptation for certain purposes by his tools, so our faith is tried by the furnace of affliction and the various instruments of providence to ascertain its genuineness, and to prepare it for further acts of usefulness.

Let us not *resist* the trial of our faith, but calmly and joyfully submit. IT IS FOR OUR GOOD. Faith shall be *purified*, *increased*, and *strengthened* by it; and as faith is the root and life of all the graces, they shall derive benefit from the trial of faith. "The trying of your faith," saith St. James, "**WORK-ETH PATIENCE**" (James i, 3). St. Peter says that the trial of your faith is much more precious than gold "that perisheth, though it be tried with fire" (1 Peter i, 7). "When he hath tried me," says Job, "I shall come forth AS GOLD" (Job xxiii, 10). It is the *tried* machine that is chosen for work, the *tried* coin that is current, the *tried* principles that are relied upon, the *tried* servant that is trusted, the *tried* warrior that is successful in battle and receives the reward of his sovereign; so it is the **TRIED FAITH** which does the most work for Christ, bears up under the most reproaches for Him, receives the most confidence from fellow-Christians, fights the greatest battles for the truth, and obtains the greatest glory in the day of recompence.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Guard well against this sin of human nature. Though a believer in Christ, you may be tempted to indulge in it. What is more natural than to thank God that we are not as other men?—than to trust in ourselves that we are righteous?—than to go about to establish our own righteousness?—than to think that we are good by our own efforts, and that our prayers, tears, repentance, faith, charities, zeal, are works which originate in ourselves, and contain merit which commends us to God? Such thoughts or feelings are contrary to the spirit of the Saviour's religion. They rob God of His glory, ignore the atonement, subvert the scheme of the Gospel, usurp the office of Jesus, dispense with the agency of the Spirit, reverse the teaching of inspiration, make man his own lord and his own way to heaven. The enormity of such sin must at once be evident. Are we surprised that Jesus should speak so often, so strong, and so effectual against the

self-righteousness of the Jews? That St. Paul should do the same? If we are indulging in this sin, those Divine denunciations are as applicable to us as to them.

My brother, examine the ground of your hope. Ask yourself whether you have come to the Saviour as a poor, miserable, naked, undone sinner, and whether you have taken Him as your "Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption;" whether He is your Hope, your Joy, your Peace; whether you live in Him and He in you; whether you are ready to confess, because you feel it, that *all* the good that is in you and done by you is accomplished through the blessing which He bestows; whether you are willing to declare that after you have attained the highest possible holiness and performed the largest amount of good works, that you are an unprofitable servant, only having done what you *ought* to have done by Divine help; and, therefore, all the glory shall be ascribed to Him to whom alone it belongs?

THY WAY—NOT MINE.

Thy way, not *mine*, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Thine own hand;
Choose out the path for me.
Smooth let it be, or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight it matters not,
It leads me to Thy rest.
I dare not choose my lot;
I would not if I might:
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.
The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine; so let the way
That leads to it be Thine,
Else surely I might stray.

Take Thou my cup, and it
With joy or sorrow fill!
As best to Thee may seem,
Choose Thou my good and ill.

Choose Thou for me my friends,
My sickness or my health;
Choose Thou my cares for me,
My poverty or wealth.

Not mine—not mine the choice,
In things or great or small;
Be Thou my guide, my strength,
My wisdom, and my all.

Anon.

CHAPTER XVIII.

(Eighteenth Meeting.)

CHRISTIAN HOPE.

THERE are few but know the encouraging influence of hope in regard to this world. It animates the warrior on the battle-field, the mariner in the storm, the traveller in his journey, the tradesman in his business, the criminal in his cell, the youth in his prospects. Equally encouraging is hope to the Christian. Your hope is implanted within you by Christ, nay, it is associated with Him as He dwells upon the throne of your heart. Hence it is a living and a lively hope; a gracious and blessed hope; a strengthening and stimulating hope. It rests on the covenant of God in the Gospel as its basis; it casts its anchorage into all the future good things of grace and glory promised by Him whose word endureth for ever. Your hope may have much to try it; but it cannot fail if it is the hope which an indwelling Christ inspires. It is an anchor fastened

to the eternal Rock of Ages. "Every link in its cable-chain is a promise which shall outlast all the storms of time, and which eternity itself shall never break asunder. The storm may come. The heaviest billows of suffering, of sorrow, of trial, of the very darkness of death, may every hour threaten to swallow up the frail bark. It is impossible; Hope's cable has no end but that which with the anchor twines round Christ. Hope, in the darkest and stormiest hour, has only to join one promise to another, to give forth its cable-chain, and on the billows of adversity ride out the storm, anchored on the Rock of Ages."

FOREBODINGS AND THEIR ANTIDOTES.

Israel had fallen into the hands of the Midianites, and were sorely oppressed by them. The Lord had a mind to deliver them. For this purpose He sent His angel to Gideon, to commission him to undertake the deliverance. The angel said unto him, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." And yet with all his valour, mark how forebodingly he speaks unto the angel:—"Oh, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites" (Judges vi, 12, 13). Here was the foreboding of Gideon. Where was the antidote? First, "The Lord is with thee." Secondly, "And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites; have not I sent thee?" (Judges vi, 14).

How often are we like Gideon, reasoning against the Lord; thinking that our evils are evidences of the Lord's absence; seeing no way of escape from them, and nothing but destruction awaiting us. My brother, open thine ear of faith, and listen to what the Lord Jehovah says: "Thou art Mine, I have redeemed thee." "My grace is sufficient for thee." "I will make a way for thy escape." Here is **THY MIGHT** from the

Lord. Go in this, and thou shalt be saved from all thy forebodings.

Jacob once thought that all God's dealings made against him; but the *reality* proved his thoughts to be vain.

David, at one time, saw nothing but destruction from Saul. "Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them." Look at the antidote:—"But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land" (1 Sam. xxii, 26, 27). And now David is safe.

Our enemies may surround us; and we may fear: but if we trust in the Lord, He will divert them, confound them, or slay them. **WE SHALL BE SAFE.**

SEEK HOLINESS.

There is a great desire in many Christian people for consolation. This seems to be the chief object of their pursuit. If they cannot attain this, they are full of complaint and discouragement. Guard against this error. However valuable and desirable consolation is, it is not the *chief* thing. Seek *holiness*. Solid and enduring consolation is the *result* of this, and not its forerunner. If, therefore, you seek consolation distinct and independent, or prior to holiness, you will fail of the end. Possess holiness, and you will enjoy consolation, if not in its rapturous joys, in its calm, settled, solid nature. This will be the effect of holiness as surely as warmth is the effect of the falling of the sun's rays upon you. **HE WHO IS HOLY MUST BE HAPPY**, as certainly as are the angels, and the God of the angels.

LIFE OUT OF DEATH.

While on the one hand you are to reckon yourself dead unto sin, you are on the other to reckon yourself alive unto God, as the result of your death unto sin. "The beautiful

flowers spring up from dead seeds; and from the death of those evil principles, that spread so diffusively and darkly over the natural heart, springs up the beauty of a new life, the quiet but ravishing bloom of holiness."

UNION WITH CHRIST.

"He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John iii, 24).

"Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii, 20).

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John xv, 4, 5).

NEEDLESS FEAR.

How prone we are to indulge in fear, where there is no real ground for fear! The disciples as they walked to the sepulchre of Jesus, said one to the other, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" They feared that the stone would be at the mouth of the tomb; they knew they would be unable to remove it; and they doubted whether there would be any one to remove it for them. But how groundless was their fear; for when they came to the sepulchre, and looked, "they saw that the stone *was* rolled away." Had these disciples truly considered the *words* of their Lord, His faithfulness, and His power, they would not only not have feared, but believed that the stone *was* rolled away, and their Lord *risen*. Are we not often like these disciples in regard to many duties, trials, and sufferings which we anticipate in the future? We see them before us; we approach them; but we fear that they are of such magnitude that it is impossible for us to meet them; but when we come up to them, we find that the "great stone" is rolled

away, and our entrance into them is easy and unfettered. Now, had we believed the Word of God, which tells us, as our day our strength shall be, we should never have had any fear. We should have marched on in the right way, believing that every difficulty would be removed, and that the Lord would call us to nothing but He would give grace to meet, or Himself come and do it for us. Oh these needless fears, how depressing is their influence! how they becloud the future! how they rob us of enjoyment in the present!

“ Give to the winds thy fears ;
Hope, and be undismay'd :
God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears ;
God shall lift up thy head.
Through waves, and clouds, and storms,
He gently clears thy way ;
Wait thou His time, so shall this night
Soon end in joyous day.”

TROUBLES.

We are born to troubles ; they are inseparably connected with life, in some form or other, wherever life is found. Religion, even, does not exempt us from troubles, unless it is those which are the necessary consequences of a course of sin. The troubles, however, which come upon us in the *religious life* are accompanied with the helpful presence of God, the comforts of Divine grace, and the prospect of an eternal deliverance in heaven.

Meet, then, the troubles which befall you as a Christian, with fortitude and patience. Take them all as coming for some gracious purpose. They may be various in their kind, such as affliction of the body, depression of mind, trials of faith, “persecution for righteousness’ sake,” bereavement, loss of earthly goods ; nevertheless, as they come forth directly from the Divine counsel, or from agencies which He permits to assail you, they shall “work together for good.” “God no sooner,”

says Bishop Wilson, "discovers in your heart an ardent desire of well-doing, and of submitting to His will, but He prepares for you occasions of trying your virtue; and, therefore, confident of His love, receive cheerfully a medicine prepared by a Physician that cannot be mistaken, and cannot give you anything but what will be for your good."

Do not forget your sources of consolation in trouble: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify Me." "Because he hath set his love upon Me, I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him." "The Lord will be a refuge in times of trouble." "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion." "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Take these utterances of holy truth, and stay your soul upon them, in security and peace. Let every wave of trouble only be a means of greater sanctification, and of more rapid progress to the sweet harbour of eternal repose in heaven.

THE FACE ZIONWARDS.

If your face is Zionwards, that is, towards heaven, it shows that you have turned from the way of death into the way of life; for you could not possibly stand in the way to hell, and at the same time have your face towards heaven, any more than you could look forward and backward with one act of the eyes. If your face is Zionwards, endeavour, by the grace of God, to keep it so. Do not, however, be satisfied by merely having your face towards heaven; but move on nearer and nearer to its blessed entrance. Let the eyes of your faith be always open, looking upon its beautiful gates, its beautiful streets, its beautiful mansions, its beautiful river, its beautiful trees, its beautiful harps of gold and dazzling crowns of life, and white-robed saints and glorious angels, and unveiled Deity, and the enrapturing vision of the Saviour; and as you see these things, let them form a mighty magnet to draw you on in your journey. Let your ears listen to its beautiful music;

to its Divine and angelic invitations; and as you hear, make haste on your way to enter into the "rest." Let the thoughts of earth's fading joys, departing friends, fleeting time, deceptive scenes, oppressing doubts and imperfections, urge you on in the race set before you. When the Jew once had his face Zionwards on his return from Babylonish thralldom, oh, with what joy, with what hope, with what anticipations, with what persevering efforts, did he keep on his way, ascending every hill, passing every valley, enduring every privation! Zion, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, was the attraction. Nothing on the way, no city or people however flattering and promising, could make up for Zion. On he went, with his face Zionwards, until he came to the city of his God and of his fathers. So, Christian, go on your journey to heaven.

PRESENCE OF SATAN.

It is no wonder that you are troubled with the presence of Satan. Now is his hour and power to pursue the people of God. If our first parents found him in paradise before they had sinned, and before sin had come into the world, is it any surprise that since sin reigns, and you are subject to it in some of its effects, that you should find him in your closet, in your family, in your business, in your public devotions? If Jesus, the Spotless and Blessed, found him in the wilderness and the garden, can you, my brother, expect to be exempt? No. While you are in the body, beneath the skies, you will be subject to his assaults. Let it be your care not so much to *escape* Satan as to resist and overcome him. Though he is permitted to tempt, thank God, he need not conquer. The Captain of your salvation is *nearer* than Satan, even in your heart; and He is stronger than Satan. With Jesus *in* you and *with* you, oh, how happy and triumphant you may be, although in the very presence of Abaddon himself!

INFLUENCE OF GOOD EXAMPLE.

Let us, as Christians, labour to have our example such as shall have influence for good upon the ungodly. Our children ought to feel that our piety as parents cannot be gainsayed or resisted. Our fellow-workmen ought to be silenced in their slander of religion by our consistency. Our servants should take knowledge of us as masters that we are Christian, kind, and merciful. We should in every relation of life manifest such a beauty of holiness as will convince all who see it that religion is the "better part," and the "one thing needful." Justin Martyr confessed that it was the innocence of the primitive Christians that led him to leave philosophy and embrace Christianity. An infidel once left the house of a Christian in which he was living, saying, "If I stay here any longer I shall become a Christian in spite of myself." A minister once stated that it was nothing but the consistency of his father that saved him from infidelity to which he was at one time very much inclined.

HE CARETH FOR US.

Shall He be "Our Father which is in heaven," and not care for us? Does an earthly father with his fallen nature care for *his* children, and shall not our heavenly Father, with His infinitely holy nature, care for *His* children? Blessed be His name, He *does* care for us. He has told us so; and more than this, He has *shown* us His care. In the beneficent providence by which He has provided for us in the past portion of our lives; in the great redemption which He has accomplished for us by His Son; in the perfect revelation of His mind to instruct us in the way of life and salvation; in the plenteous operations of His Spirit to effect our full restoration to His image and nature; in the abundant supplies of His grace to preserve us in His fear; in the free and rich communications of His blessings in answer to our prayers; in the "exceeding great and precious promises" of His love; in the "more en-

during substance" which He has laid up for us in heaven, He *shows* that He cares for us. As a mother careth for her son that loveth her, so He cares for us. Oh, how affectionate, how kind, how minute, how constant, how vast is His care for us! He puts our tears in His bottle. He corrects us in love. He sustains us with our burdens. He counsels us by His wisdom. When we pass through the waters He accompanies us, and keeps us from sinking. When we go into the fire, He stands by us to shield us from the scorching flames. When we enter the conflict, He fighteth for us. You can think of no scene, time, circumstance, or experience of your Christian life, but He careth for you. Take this truth, and use it as a source of ever-flowing consolation and support. Surely, if He thus care for you, there is no need for you to carry any *anxious* care yourself. The Apostle Peter, with his experimental knowledge of the Divine care, exhorts you to cast ALL your care upon Him, for He careth for you.

"Thou art as much His care as if beside
Nor man nor angel lived in heaven or earth ;
Thus sunbeams pour alike their glorious tide
To light up worlds, or wake an insect's mirth :
They shine and shine with unexhausted store—
Thou art thy Saviour's darling, seek no more."

NEARNESS OF SIN.

Examine whether sin be *in* you ; or if it be in you, whether it *reign* over you. It is sin *in* you, and especially *reigning over you*, that you have to fear. If it reigns in you, and manifests itself in any degree in your life, you must wash you and make you clean, by the merit of the Saviour's blood, or it will effect your ruin. If it is in you, but in subjection to the authority of Christ, you have need to watch its motions, lest, in any sense, it gain the ascendancy over you. Be a co-worker with Christ to keep sin in captivity until it totally expire. Free from the reigning influence of sin within, and co-operating

with the grace of God to increase its weakness until it die the death, the sin that is *without*, however, near, rampant and powerful, shall have no dominion over you. Sin may prevail in the town of which you are a citizen; you may, of necessity, sometimes meet it in the streets as you walk; you may hear it in words of blasphemy and cursing, and see it in works of dishonesty and drunkenness; but it shall not touch you. Sin may be bold and strong in the place where you work, swaying its sceptre over others, but it shall be bound captive in your presence. Sin may have a fortress and armoury in the house next to you, but none of its fiery darts shall enter your shield. Nay, sin may even dwell in your own house, with your wife or children, but you shall not be contaminated thereby. Sin may mock you, flatter you, woo you, set snares to entrap you, breathe upon you, talk to you; but it shall not pollute you. You may be annoyed by it, weep over it, contend with it, but no weapon which it wields shall prosper against you. You may live with sin thus near, and be preserved from its law and dominion. As the man goes down in the diving bell, and is surrounded with the waters, but not touched by them, so you may dwell in the life of this world. As the oil may be cast into the water, and not blend with it, so may you live with sin around you, and not be corrupted by it. As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego passed through the fire, and were not burnt, so may you through life, and not be scorched with sin. How near the Saviour ever saw sin! What assaults it made upon Him! But He *did* no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. So, while you may feel the nearness of sin, the reigning power of Christ's grace within you is sufficient to keep you pure and unspotted, harmless and undefiled.

MY FATHER.

"Is this the way, my Father?"—"Tis, my child;
Thou must pass through the tangled, dreary wild,
If thou wouldst reach the city undefiled,—
Thy peaceful home above."

"But enemies are round?"—"Yes, child, I know
That where thou least expect'st thou'lt find a foe;
But victor thou shalt prove o'er all below,—
Only, seek strength above."

"My Father, it is dark."—"Child, take My hand;
Cling close to me,—I'll lead thee through the land;
Trust My all-seeing care,—so shalt thou stand
Midst glory bright above."

"My footsteps seem to slide."—"Child, only raise
Thine eye to Me, then in these slippery ways,
I will hold up thy goings: thou shalt praise
Me for each step above."

"O Father, I'm weary!"—"Child, lean thy head
Upon My breast; it was My love that spread
Thy rugged path; hope on still, till I have said,
Rest,—rest for aye above."—*J. B. M.*

CHAPTER XIX.

(*Nineteenth Meeting.*)

USE OF INFIRMITIES.

THOUGH infirmities, either of the body or of the spirit, are not to be coveted or sought after, yet, if we are the subjects of them, we may make them the *occasion* of some advantage to us. "If I cannot," says John Newton, "*take pleasure in infirmities*, I can sometimes feel the profit of them. I can conceive a king to pardon a rebel, and take him into his family, and then say, 'I appoint you, for a season, to wear a fetter. At a certain season I will send a messenger to knock it off. In the mean time, this fetter will serve to remind you of your state; it may humble you, and restrain you from rambling.'"

The Apostle Paul was the subject of infirmities; but he used

them to serve a good purpose. "Most gladly," he says, "will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." If your infirmities, my brother, are of such a nature as not to include sin, but such as are natural or providential, you need not be distressed or discouraged on their account. You may, as the apostle, rather glory in them, because of the grace or power of Christ which shall rest upon you, enabling you to manifest Christian patience, meekness, love, and submission; enabling you to meet all duty and trial with a spirit and conduct which will be acceptable to God. So that with all your infirmities you may have confidence, assurance, and hope. You may exemplify the Christian character. You may exalt your Master, and commend His religion. And bear in mind that, by-and-bye, the infirmities will be broken off, and you shall be introduced into a life in which there will be perfection, exempt from all spot, wrinkle, or any such thing.

INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The indwelling of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is necessary to be a Christian :—"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Rom. viii, 9).

The indwelling of the Spirit is the great distinguishing feature between a Christian and an unbeliever :—"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom. viii, 5). "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the SPIRIT WHICH IS OF GOD; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God" (1 Cor. ii, 12).

By the indwelling of the Spirit the Christian knows that he is a child of God :—"For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii, 15, 16). "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but AFTER THE SPIRIT" (Rom. viii. 1). "Hereby

know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, BECAUSE HE HATH GIVEN US OF HIS SPIRIT" (1 John iv, 13).

The indwelling of the Spirit furnishes a source of help, comfort, and adornment to the Christian in the Divine life. He is the "Comforter within him; He is the Teacher of the things of God; He is the Helper of his infirmities in prayer; He is his Power in all duties; He is the Fire to purify him from all his dross, the Clean Water to cleanse him from all his idols, the Sanctifier of his affections, the Sealer of him unto the day of redemption, the Earnest of his inheritance in heaven, the Root and Life of the graces, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, &c.

How important and essential is the indwelling of the Spirit! There is no saving faith, no reigning Christ, no enjoyed religion in the heart, without Him. Does He dwell in *us*? Are we His temples? Has he undisputed sway over the entire kingdom of our souls?

IGNORANCE OF THE WAY.

You are so involved in the difficulties of life that you know not the way in which you are going. You are called to suffer by God, and you go into it as Abraham, not knowing whither you go. Every step seems unknown to you, as it did to Israel when they went down into the Red Sea. Nevertheless, be of good courage. He who has called you, knows and marks every inch of the way. Your steps "are ordered by the Lord." He loves you with a Father's love, and is leading you to a wise and gracious end. Confide in Him. Commit your all to Him. If the way is dark to you, it is full of sunshine to Him. If you know not what the issue will be, He is perfectly aware of it. Hear His comfortable words spoken to you as you go on in the way: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine. When thou passest through the water, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

RESOLUTION AGAINST SIN.

Let your resolve against sin arise from and rest in the grace of Jesus Christ. Any other spring and foundation will totally fail. Oh how many there are who see the evil of sin, who hate it, and resolve not to commit it; but alas, sin is too strong for their resolution, because the resolution is simply verbal, or made in their own strength. Luther tells us of a German divine, that he acknowledged that, before he came to understand the free and powerful grace of Christ, he resolved, and vowed a hundred times against a particular sin; yet could never get power over it, nor his heart purified from it, till he came to see that he trusted too much to his own resolutions, and too little to Jesus Christ; but when his faith had engaged against his sin, he obtained the victory.

COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

Yes, it is a truth, consoling and strengthening, to know that if you have union with Christ, you have communion with His people. You have it in mutual conversation and prayer: "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." You have communion with the saints in the Spirit. He unites you together in one body, in one family, in one building, in one temple. The Saviour prayed for this among His disciples in all ages: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through Thy word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." "Ye are come unto the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of the just made perfect."

“ In one fraternal bond of love,
One fellowship of mind,
The saints below and saints above
Their bliss and glory find.
None who are truly born of God
Can live in enmity ;
Then may we love each other, Lord,
As we are loved by Thee.

So may the unbelieving world
See how true Christians live ;
And glorify our Saviour's grace,
And seek that grace to prove.”

PROGRESS OF RELIGION.

We must not forget that there is progress in religion as in other things. Does the seed of the field grow into the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear? so should the seed of grace within the heart pass on through similar stages until it reach perfection of growth. Does the building rise gradually from the foundation to the top stone? so should “the building of God” in our souls. Does the light of day first come with the wings of the morning, spreading themselves upon the mountains, and then rising higher and higher until the darkness is vanished, and all things are covered with its beauteous rays? so should the light of religion, though at first small, rise, spread, and strengthen within us, until all the mists and vapours of sin and impurity are chased away, and we become light in the Lord, dwell in light, and walk in light as He is in light. As Christ was in His bodily appearance still increasing in wisdom and knowledge, and favour with God and man, until He was perfected in glory; so should He be in His spiritual appearance in our souls. Christians are spoken of as going on from strength to strength until they appear in Zion before God. Religion is a way, and no one can reach the end without *progress*. Religion is a race, and to come to

the goal, there must be *running*. Religion is a heaven, and to diffuse its influence abroad, it must *work*. The end of religion is in heaven, and the beginning on earth; therefore, to attain the end, we must *rise*. Do not, then, my Christian brother, remain content in being *stationary*. Your religion is liveliest, purest, strongest, most divine and Scriptural, when most *progressive*.

THE HAPPINESS OF WALKING WITH GOD.

If you walk with God, you will realise a happiness which will be nobler and purer than the happiness which any of the company of this world can afford. Having the most glorious, blessed, and gracious Being in the universe for your companion, you will enjoy a happiness which will in nature come from and correspond with Himself. Baxter, in describing this happiness, breaks out in his peculiar style of strength and spirituality: "Oh, happy man that walks with God, though neglected and contemned by all about him! What blessed sights doth he daily see! What ravishing tidings, what pleasant melody, doth he daily hear! What delectable food doth he daily taste! He seeth, by faith, the God, the glory which the blessed spirits see at hand by nearest looking upon. He seeth in a glass darkly, which they behold with open face. He seeth the glorious majesty of his Creator, the eternal King, the Cause of causes, the Composer, Upholder, Preserver, and Governor of all worlds. He beholdeth the wonderful methods of His providence; and what he cannot reach to see, he admireth, and waiteth for the time when that also shall be opened to his view. He seeth, by faith, the world of spirits, the hosts that attend the throne of God; their perfect righteousness, their full devotion to God; their ardent love, their flaming zeal, their ready and cheerful obedience, their dignity and shining glory, in which the lowest of them exceed that which the disciples saw on Moses and Elias, when they appeared on the holy mount and talked with Christ. He hears, by faith, the heavenly concert, the high and harmonious songs of praise,

the joyful triumphs of crowned saints, the sweet commemorations of the things that were done and suffered on earth, with the praises of Him that redeemed them by His blood, and made them kings and priests unto God. Therein he hath sometimes a sweet foretaste of the everlasting pleasures which, though it be but little, as Jonathan's honey on the end of his rod, or as the cluster of grapes which were brought from Canaan into the wilderness, yet is more excellent than all the delights of sinners."

INCONSISTENCY IN PROFESSORS.

I have read of a Pagan who once saw some Christians partake of the Lord's Supper, and observing their reverence and devotion in the ceremony, asked what the action meant. He was told "that God, having first emptied their hearts of all their sins, as pride, envy, covetousness, contention, luxury, and the rest, did now enter into them Himself, with a purpose to dwell there." He heard all this, and was silent. He followed and watched these Christians, who had received the sacrament, for two days together. And perceiving some of them to fall into quarrels, uncleanness, rapacity, and drunkenness so soon, he declared his mind in the following manner:—"I confess that your religion may be good, your devotion good, your profession good, but your hospitality is stark naught: that you will not give your God two days' lodging."

SOJOURNERS.

We do well to remind ourselves often that here we have no "continuing city," that we are travelling on as fast as we can to another and a better in heaven. "Our home is not here;" it is beyond the stars. Then let us pass on, living in hope, by-and-bye, to join the family above.

As sojourners, let us live in preparation for our home:—"Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. ii, 11).

As sojourners, let us submit to any reproaches which may come upon us by the inhabitants of the country through which we are passing, for the sake of Christ:—"Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. xiii, 13).

As sojourners, the Redeemer prays for us:—"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii, 16).

As sojourners, we are followers of all good people that have gone before us:—"We are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding" (1 Chron. xxix, 15).

As sojourners, we have a glorious end in view. Read Heb. xii, 22, 23.

" Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam;
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

DIVINE GUIDANCE.

You trust the Lord will guide and bring you to heaven. If you are His child you have a safe ground for your trust in the promises which He has given, and in the relations in which He stands to you. As your Shepherd, He will lead you into green pastures, and by the side of still waters: He will restore your soul, and lead you in paths of righteousness for His name's sake (Ps. xxiii, 3). As your Counsellor, He will guide you with His counsel, and afterwards receive you to glory (Ps. lxxiii, 24). As He guided Israel through the wilderness, He shall guide you:—"He led them about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead them" (Deut. xxxii, 10-12). As a Father, He will guide you in tenderness, love, and affection. As a Captain, He will guide you victorious over all your adversaries. As a Friend, that

sticketh closer than a brother, He will guide you with constancy and faithfulness. He will guide you in the way of safety, wisdom, purity, if not of fulness of joy, peace, prosperity.

My brother, submit to be guided by Him as He pleases. Never withdraw your confidence from Him. Question not the propriety of the way. Avoid thinking that you could guide yourself much better. Wherever He guides you, follow, in all meekness and assurance. If He guide you into darkness, want, extremity, conflict, murmur not. Remember He is your Guide and no one else; He is responsible; He has charge of you. It is His to bring you into the Promised Land; it is yours to follow and to enter.

“Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land:
I am weak—but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more.”

EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY THINGS.

It is important for you to understand and to feel the just claims of the things that are earthly and the things that are heavenly. As a child of God, no one has more right to the things of earth than you; for they are the property of your Father, and He has given you a life interest in them, in the Covenant of Grace. It is your privilege to enjoy all the pure pleasures of mind; all the pure pleasures of home, kindred, and friendship; all the pure pleasures of bodily appetites and affections. Your Father has given you these things “richly to enjoy.” In this sense the *world* is yours. But, at the same time, it must not be forgotten, that while you rejoice in possession and enjoyment of these things, you must “rejoice as though you rejoiced not, and use this world as not abusing it;” you must meet the claims of earth in the fear of God, with a sense of responsibility and danger; you must connect the spirit of

piety with them so that they may, instead of hindering the progress of grace, promote and establish it. Remember that the *heavenly things* are the feast and fulness for your soul, and as a child going to that feast, you must eat sparingly of the things of earth on the way so that your desire for them may be healthy and strong. Heaven is your *home*, and, as one journeying thither, you must not think of making your bed in the flowers of earth, however fragrant, or building your house in its garden, however beautiful: for all those things shall pass away. Your stay among them must be short. Inhale the fragrance, enjoy the scenery; but *pass on*. Tarry not. There is danger in delay. You may find thorns and serpents among the flowers. Heaven claims your faith, your hope, your sacrifice, your pursuit. There is your treasure, your Saviour, your elder brethren, your children, your **ALL IN ALL**. Let heavenly things, then, have the supreme attraction. Sit loose to earth, and have your souls ready for flight in any moment into the paradise of God.

NECESSITY OF ASSURANCE.

Can it be right for me to go
 On in this dark, uncertain way;
 Say "I believe," and yet not know
 Whether my sins are put away?
 Not know my trespasses forgiven,
 Until I meet Him in the air;
 Not know that I shall get to heaven,
 Until I wake, and find me there?
 Must clouds, and darkness veil my brow
 Until I dwell with saints in light?
 And must I walk in darkness now,
 Because I cannot walk by sight?
 And shall I just begin to say,
 "Father, Thine every word is true,"
 And cast my doubts and fears away,
 When all the world will own it too?

Is this the way to treat the God
 Who bids me love, and trust Him *now* ?
 Is this the way to use the Word,
 Given to guide me here *below* ?
 How can it be my joy to dwell
 On the rich power of Jesus' blood,
 If all the while I cannot tell
 That it HAS sealed MY peace with God ?
 How can I be like Christ below—
 How like my Lord in virtues shine—
 Unless with conscious joy I know
 His Father and His God as MINE ?
 O crush this cruel unbelief,
 These needless, shameful doubts remove ;
 And suffer me no more to grieve
 The God whom I do really love.

Anon.

CHAPTER XX.

(Twentieth Meeting.)

DIFFICULTIES OF THE WAY.

THERE is no way of life but has its difficulties. You cannot, therefore, expect that your way to heaven should be exempt from them. When you started for heaven, you commenced a course of life opposed to your old master, Satan ; to your old associates, sinners ; and to your old habits in sin : it is then no wonder that these should rise against you, and throw all the difficulties they can in your way.

In looking at difficulties it is important to consider whence they come, what they are, what their design, and how they are

to be met. If they come from Satan, their design is to retard your progress to heaven, and must be battled with in the name and strength of the Captain of your salvation; if from your old companions, in the way of enticements, ridicule, persecutions, their design is to move your feet from stability, and bring you again into their society. These must be resisted with firmness of principle and unwavering fidelity. Keep from their way. Close your ears to their insinuations. Tell them, as a Christian, you cannot be moved from your faith in the Gospel; your mind is made up; it is all vanity for them to expend any effort upon you; if they will not turn from their folly to religious wisdom, you do not, by God's help, intend to turn from religious wisdom to their folly again. If you have difficulties from yourself, they show that there is a conflict going on within; that grace is working in opposition to sin; that the "old man" is struggling for vigorous life. Meet these difficulties with self-denial, self-mortification, watchfulness, self-examination, and a steady growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. In this way your difficulties shall brace you for further enterprise, and nerve you for greater conflicts in the time to come.

THE CHASTENING ROD.

As there is seldom a child in a family but sometimes needs the parental rod of correction, so the child of God is in need of the chastening of the Lord. We need the love of the world weakened; our natural religious sloth removed; our negligence in duty lessened; our inbred corruptions uprooted: and how are these ends to be attained? Our Father knows of the existence of these things within us, and He adopts the wisest means for their destruction. The rod of chastening—the sick-bed—bereavement—blighted hopes—are among some of the chastenings of His hand. But whatever stripes He lays upon us, let us not forget that He *loves us*. He would not deal with us so if He cared nothing for us. Because He loves us, and desires our higher attainments in grace on earth,

and glory in heaven, He adopts such methods of discipline. Did He wish to destroy us He would let us alone; and we should be borne on by the full tide of evils within us, and around us, down to the deepest depth of corruption here and destruction hereafter. An earthly father that loves his child corrects his mistakes, his faults, his disobediences, so that he might make the better man: but if he is careless of his future manhood, and has no affection towards him in his youth, he allows him to follow his own course of life. So it is with God. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and correcteth every son whom he receiveth."

"I know the cross is needful, and I know
In love, and not in wrath, Thou chastenest;
The sufferings Thy children undergo
But fit them sooner for eternal rest.
Deep are the chastenings that our spirits need,
To wean them from the idolatry of earth;
Our flesh must tremble, and our hearts must bleed,
Ere life can yield us fruits of any worth."

FALLEN INTO SIN.

You have fallen into sin. We will not now enter into the cause, nature, extent, and consequences of it. There is the fact before you, of which you are convinced, for which you mourn, and which you candidly confess. As a natural effect of the sin you smart, grieve, and are cast down in spirit. You are discouraged, and tempted to throw aside all pretensions to religion. You ask, "What must I do, under the circumstance?" Do, my brother! Do as a child who, falling into the mire, raises himself, or calls for help to some one else, and goes home to be washed from his filthiness. Rise from your place of fall by the help of the Spirit, and go at once to the Fountain of Atone-ment. Do as a man who has met with a fractured limb, or a bruised eye:—he goes or is led to the doctor for a cure. Thus go you to the Saviour, the Good Physician, and He will bind

up your wound, and make you whole. Do as a woman who has soiled her beautiful garment—use the means to take out the blemish, and make it as perfect as before. Never for a moment entertain the thought of relinquishing religion, or even remaining as you are. If you do either the one or the other, you will gratify the devil and the world, but grieve Christ and His people, as well as inflict a thousandfold greater injury upon yourself. Why should you go from this one sin into a *life of sins*? Why should you plunge the *whole* body and soul into the filthiness of the flesh and spirit? And then, if you will not do this, why should you retain the stain which your sin has contracted, when the Saviour is waiting to wash it out? Why should you lie bleeding under the wound, when He is by your side to raise you up, heal the wound, and make you whole? David fell into sin, but he rose from it, and went to God, and found salvation; and was better after than before. Peter fell into sin, but he did not remain there. The Saviour looked upon Peter, and Peter looked upon the Saviour; and Peter rose into a newer, stronger, happier life than he had before. Let it be so with you. Gain experience by your fall. Learn to have less confidence in self and more in Christ. Learn to live more in the spirit of constant watchfulness and earnest prayer.

THE MANNER OF THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

Let us not be curious to know the *manner* in which the Spirit witnesses to our sonship. If we enjoy His witness, that should fill us with such joy and satisfaction as to overwhelm all curiosity concerning the *manner*. A man who has lost his sight, and recovered it again, is too much engaged in the use of the light, and too happy in its enjoyment, to be inquiring *how* the light comes from the sun, *how* it radiates the atmosphere, and *how* it falls upon his eyes, enabling him to see. He *has* the light, and that is sufficient. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

"The manner," says Wesley, "how the Divine testimony is

manifested to the heart, I do not take upon me to explain. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it. The wind bloweth, and I hear the sound thereof, but I cannot tell how it cometh, or whither it goeth! As no one knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him; so the *manner* of the things of God knoweth no one save the Spirit of God. But the fact we know, namely, that the Spirit of God does give a believer such a testimony of his adoption, that while it is present to the soul, he can no more doubt of the shining of the sun, while he stands in the full blaze of his beams."

PURIFICATION OF TRIALS.

"When I was at Shields," says Whitfield, "I went into a glass-house; and, standing very attentive, I saw several masses of burning glass, of various forms. The workman took a piece of glass, and put it into one furnace, then he put it into a second, and then into a third. I said to him, 'Why do you put this through so many fires?' He answered, 'O sir, the first was not hot enough, nor the second, and therefore we put it into the third, and that will make it transparent.'"

Thus it is with God. He puts us into this affliction to purify us; but if that is not enough, He puts us into another more trying, and still into another until we are like Him. We must be *pure*; and God knows the exact process to accomplish this.

HE GIVETH MORE GRACE.

In all the varying forms and degrees of Christian experience we do well to bear in mind this passage of St. James, "But He giveth more grace." From which we may learn that God, in the bestowment of His help to His people, is not bound to one unalterable rule, by which He gives invariably so much and no more. And we may learn also, that He is not limited in Himself, and therefore can only give a limited measure. He giveth grace to His people very much on the same prin-

ciple that He gives sunshine, dew, and showers, to nature ; according to their necessities. Are your temptations more fiery now than they were yesterday ? then He giveth more grace to meet them. Are your weaknesses more felt within you now than they were yesterday ? He giveth more grace to sustain them. Your duties more numerous ? Your responsibilities more heavy ? Your enemies more powerful, bitter, and determined ? He giveth more grace, to meet your needs in all these cases. Are you increasing in the knowledge of your own sinfulness, and, as a consequence, in a sense of the necessity of more holiness ? He giveth more grace to work within you a deeper purity and fuller conformity to His image. Have *you* more need of grace than your brother Christian, arising from more weaknesses, duties, sorrows, &c. ? He gives you more grace than him. He acts in wisdom and discrimination in this regard as in everything else. Do you see standing before you, in every future period of your religious life, increasing demands upon your patience, zeal, charity, watchfulness, resignation ? Take this truth as your rod of comfort : " He giveth more grace." Endeavour to realise this every day and every moment. As you may say every day and every moment, " He giveth more light : He giveth more life ; He giveth more general temporal mercies, by which I can meet and discharge the ever-occurring obligations of time : " so pray and believe, that you may be able to affirm, " He giveth more grace, as moment follows moment, and day comes after day, enabling me to preserve spiritual life in my soul, and to grow in that life more strong, more holy, more happy, and more prepared for the everlasting life of heaven."

PERSONAL SERVICE.

The Scriptures very seldom enjoin upon us as a duty that of seeing that others do *their* duty. It speaks to *each one* in the most direct and positive tones. " Son, go work to-day in my vineyard," is the spirit in which God speaks to *every one* of His people. However much you may teach others, and yet

do not teach yourself; however much you urge others to labour, and do not labour yourself, there is on your part a sad deficiency. Not only be a teacher in duty to others, but be a teacher to yourself, and personally exemplify your teachings. Thereby you shall combine the double power of precept and example. God Himself works for us; so Christ; so the Holy Ghost: the whole Godhead, while He teaches angels and all things to work in the service of man, does Himself work with unceasing regularity and unfailing efficiency. Shall not we, then, *personally* work for Him? In the every-day work of life, do you not see *each one* working for the meat that perisheth; each one filling up his place in the great service of this world? Should it not be equally so in the religious life, in the service of God and of humanity? "If a man will not work," says St. Paul, "neither should he eat." This will not only apply to personal service in this life, but in the spiritual life. Let the question be pondered, How thrives the soul in godliness, and the life in happiness, when the man is indulging in ease in Zion, when he is content to see others work, and urge them to work, and does not work himself; but is saying, "A little more sleep, and a little more slumber, a little more folding of the arms to rest?" Is he rich in grace? Is he mighty against sin? Is he an illustrious example in holiness? Let us not forget, God requires our **PERSONAL SERVICE** for Him. This only will meet our responsibility; will employ our talents. This will brighten our graces and strengthen our principles. The inactive muscle grows stiff, but the active, pliable and strong. The unused machine rusts, but the employed keeps bright. So with us. Let us be inactive for God, and we grow cold and stiff in religion; we fritter and waste away; but if we work for Him, we are active, vigorous, and happy.

HUMILITY.

We have every reason for being humble before God. If we look at ourselves in the light of the Divine nature; contrasting His wisdom and our ignorance; His love and our enmity;

His holiness and our pollution; His kindness and our rebellion:—in the light of the law, the justice, reasonableness, and power of its claims upon us, and our willing, constant, public, and aggravating violations of it;—in the light of duty, its obligation, goodness, beneficial tendency, and our negligence of it;—in the light of heaven, its joys, company, employments, purity, and our utter unfitness to enter therein;—we shall see enough to bring down our self-confidence, our self-righteousness, our vain imaginations. We shall indeed abhor ourselves as did Job when he saw God. We shall smite upon our breast and pray for mercy, not daring even to look up to heaven. We shall feel our proper place to be the dust. If there is a spot lower than another at the footstool of the throne, we shall find it, and there cover ourselves in sackcloth and ashes before Him who is seated in Divine Majesty thereon.

We are exhorted to this humility in the Scriptures. The Spirit, who knows the proper position which man should occupy, says, "Be clothed with humility." "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God."

And let us not think that, when we are thus humbled before God, we are in any way indulging in a spirit derogatory or contrary to self-respect which it ever becomes man to feel among his fellows. No, I am speaking of humility before God, in that religious life which we should lead before Him. *This* humility is our honour, our glory, our strength. It is this which secures to us His look of compassion, His voice of mercy, His blessing of grace. Nay, more, His very presence and company. Not only does He say, "I will look upon him that is humble;" but "I will DWELL with him." When the subject aspires to the throne, the sovereign looks upon him with a frown, and casts him out as a usurper; but when he goes to the footstool, he looks in favour, holds out the sceptre in mercy, and gives him a token of sovereign goodness. So with our King on His throne. He that exalteth himself He will abase: but he that humbleth himself He will exalt.

RESTING ON CHRIST.

He is able to sustain you ; more so than a great mountain a tiny worm that lives upon its summit. He upholds ALL THINGS by the word of His power ; can He not uphold you ? He sustained the wrath of God on the Cross ; can He not bear your sins ? He supplies the necessities of angels ; can he not supply yours ? My brother, banish for ever the doubt whether He can sustain you, if you rest upon Him. Let your knowledge of Christ and experience of His love, raise you to a full confidence in Him. Throw your entire being upon Him, with all your sins, wants, sorrows, temptations, fears, weaknesses, and He will sustain you. Take Him as your "foundation," and rest upon Him as a "habitation of God through the Spirit." Take Him as your "rock," and rest upon Him in the tempests of life, and in the "swellings of Jordan."

"Other ground can no man lay ;
Jesus takes your sins away :
Jesus the foundation is—
This shall stand, and *only* this."

THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE COMFORTER.

We ought to dwell more upon this feature of the Blessed Spirit. He dwells within us, not only as the Teacher, the Witnesser, the Strengthenener, but the COMFORTER ; to dry up our tears of mourning ; to hush our doubtful complainings ; to cheer us when depressed ; to give us joy in our sorrows. Could we bear these thoughts in our minds more, we should realise larger measures of His comforting influences. "I ought," says M'Cheyne, in his diary, "to study the Comforter more—His Godhead, His love, His almightiness. I have found by experience that nothing sanctifies me so much as meditating on the Comforter."

DEPRESSION.

When the soul is weighed down, and cannot look up, it behoves you to do as the Psalmist when he was in a similar state. He entered into an examination of his soul, by close, searching inquiries; and then, having found that there was no reason for despondency, he encouraged his soul to expect a return of gladsome hours. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." If you have faith in God as *your* God; if He is the health of your countenance; then may you not command *your* soul to hope in Him against all doubts, fears, temptations, distresses? May you not ask, "*Why* art thou cast down?" Surely with Him for your God, your light, your salvation, and the object of your hope, you need not be cast down or disquieted. With these privileges you may rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks. But if in asking the reason for your depression, you find that it arises from sin committed, duty neglected, unbelief indulged, or from some mental or physical derangement of the system; then, in either case, there is no need for desponding depression. There is forgiveness with Him. As a Father, He pitieth His children. You have an Advocate with Him; and if you confess your sin, He is faithful and just to forgive your sin. So that you may indeed, even in this case, "hope in God." And as to the body of infirmity being the cause, you may assuredly "hope in God" here; for He knoweth your frame, He remembereth that you are dust. He does not hide His face from the soul because of physical wants or defects. He is still your God. You must *hope* in Him. You must *trust* in Him; and though now for a short night you have weeping, joy will come in the morning, and you will *then* praise Him.

ABIDING IN CHRIST.

Christian, wouldst thou *fruitful* be?
Jesus says, "*Abide in Me* ;"
From Him all thy fruit is found ;
May it to His praise abound !

Christian, wouldst thou *holy* be ?
Jesus says, "*Abide in Me* ;"
Sanctified in Him thou art ;
Sanctify Him in thy heart.

Christian, wouldst thou *happy* be ?
Jesus says, "*Abide in Me* ;"
He is thine exceeding joy—
Bliss Divine! without alloy.

Christian, this thy motto be—
Jesus says, "*Abide in Me* ;"
Grace and strength from Him receive—
As a branch in Jesus live.

Christian, Him thou soon shalt see ;
Then He'll say, "*Abide with Me*,
In my Father's house above—
In the bosom of His love."

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me" (John xv, 5).

"If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John xv, 6).

"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv, 7).

CHAPTER XXI.

(Twenty-first Meeting).

PLEADING THE PROMISES IN PRAYER.

IN your approaches to the Throne of Grace, do not forget to make use of the promises of your God as a means of securing the blessings you need. He says, "Put Me in remembrance, let us plead together, that thou mayest be justified." Whatever blessing you require, put Him in mind of the promise in which He has made it over to you. Do you desire to have His presence as your comfort, defence, and peace, on the way to heaven? put Him in remembrance that He has said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Do you desire to have guardian care in danger? remind Him of the promise, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Do you feel your sins to be a burden, and do you ask forgiveness? take with you the promise, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Do you seek acceptance with God, while at the same time a sense of unworthiness and the temptation of Satan would fain have you believe that He will not receive you? remember His declaration, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Do you feel the indwelling of corruption, and desire to be cleansed from all sin? plead the promise, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and from all your idols will I cleanse you."

Thus come to God, and plead His own promises, and you shall prevail. When Jacob feared Esau, and went to God for help, he reminded Him of what He had said in promise: "*Thou saidst*, I will surely do thee good." On this promise he relied, and felt that God would be faithful. It was suffi-

cient for him that Jehovah had *said* He would bless him. Let *us* rest upon the word of the Lord. He has said, "Ask and ye *SHALL* receive, seek and ye *SHALL* find, knock, and the door *SHALL* be opened." Oh, how abundantly numerous and sweet are the promises! We may plead them all before God as we need them, and rest upon them with unwavering trust; for "God is not a man, that He should lie; nor the son of man, that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

MORE THAN CONQUERORS.

We are not to wait till the hour of death before we come off "more than conquerors." This is to be our daily experience in the conflicts of life. It has this reference in the place in which St. Paul uses it in his Epistle to the Romans. It is by being more than conquerors in life that we are more than conquerors in death.

"Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, separate us from the love of Christ?" The very contrary. They unite us more closely to Him. "We not merely survive," says Newman Hall, "but are victorious." "Nay, in all these things we are *more than* conquerors through Him that loved us." *More than* conquerors,—not merely remaining in possession of the field, but coming forth unscathed from the conflict; and not merely unscathed, but invigorated. He is indeed a conqueror who, resolutely resisting an attack, wards off every blow so that he suffers no injury, and who, though the conflict may be stern, overthrows, disarms, and tramples under foot his assailant. But if with a generous hand he raises him from the ground, and, not content with overcoming his body by superior valour, subdues his spirit also by superior love, he gains a victory more complete. By mastering the foe, he becomes a conqueror, but by converting that foe into a friend, he becomes "more than a conqueror."

Such is the victory of the believer. The trials by which he

is assailed are not only deprived of all power to injure, but become the principal occasions and instruments of his invigoration, comfort, and salvation. However forbidding their appearance, they are the bearers of heaven's most precious boons. They wear the aspect of foes only at a distance, and in the beginning of the fight. Soon the Christian warrior embraces them as friends; and the weapons which seem pointed against him are by faith reversed, and become ranged around him for his defence. His assailants are now his allies; and thus recruited by the encounter, "in all these things he is *more than conqueror*, through Him that loved us."

SANCTIFICATION.

"To sanctify," says Bishop Beveridge, "in a general sense, is to cleanse, purify, or make holy. It is derived from the Latin *sanctus*, holy, and *facio*, to make. In particular, it implies to cleanse from corruption, to purify from sin, to make holy by detaching the affections from the world and its defilements, and exalting them to a supreme love to God." Hence St. John says, "Sanctify them through Thy truth." "In theology, the Holy Spirit is, by way of eminence, denominated the Sanctifier.

GOOD WORKS.

We are the workmanship of God, in regeneration, in adoption, in conformity to Himself, that we may practise good works; and the good works we have to practise are specified by God. We have to walk to heaven in the way He has laid open; we have to build up holy lives according to the plan He has drawn out:—"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. ii, 8—10).

Good works constitute the evidence of the life and reality of our faith:—"Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (Jas. ii, 17).

Good works are the produce of union with Christ:—"He

that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing" (John xv, 5).

Good works glorify God, and are a proof of our discipleship:— "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples" (John xv, 8).

Good works will be the standard of reward at the last judgment:— "Every one shall receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v, 10).

Nevertheless, let us remember, *good works do not save us:—* "We are saved by grace, through faith." See Eph. ii, 8—10; Titus iii, 5; Gal. ii, 16; Luke xvii, 10.

AN INCREASE OF FAITH.

If your faith is at all alive, and desirous of increase, you may realise your desire. Observe the following directions, with a view to obtain an increase of faith:—

1. Meditate more upon the *reality* of those things which command your faith; upon the necessity of faith in those things in order to enjoy their presence, and a saving interest in them.

2. Think more of the truthfulness and faithfulness of God in all His promises to you, in all His covenant engagements with you.

3. Set a high value upon the faith which you have; and trust it according to its strength, and enjoy the comforts which it affords.

4. Be an humble, docile learner at the feet of Jesus, in the Word which you read and hear.

5. Remove from your heart everything that is prejudicial and contradictory to faith. "How can ye believe," said Jesus, "that receive honour one of another, and seeketh not the honour that cometh from God only?" Is there any unchastity within, it must be removed, or how can you believe in the necessity and obligation of purity, so as to seek it? Is the love of the world your failing, it must be given up, or how can you believe the riches of grace to be the true riches?—"That

if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him?" You cannot believe in self-denial, self-mortification, taking up the cross, and keeping the body under, if the soul loves earthly ease and pleasures.

6. Make an increase of faith one of the chief subjects of your prayers. As this is your main want, call especial attention to it, from God, and cease not in the request until the want is supplied.

7. In times of darkness, arising from temptation, or affliction, or losses, or any other cause, do not complain, give way to fear, or rebel against God; but wait, watch, pray, hope, believe.

THE WAY TO HEAVEN.

Heaven exists the other side of the strait gate, and the way to it is through the strait gate; and to enter that we must *strive* in the exercise of godly repentance, lively faith, self-denial, mortification of sin, and holy deeds in life.

The way to heaven is "the narrow way," and to walk in it we must be circumspect; we must lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth easily beset us; we must move in all things according to the rules laid down by the King of the way.

The way to heaven is rough and rugged. "All broad and smooth ways," says one, "are dangerous. Woe to us when the world favours us, and our lives seem void of trouble. Crosses and difficulties are the surest marks of the way to heaven. Let us follow the footsteps of the saints along the craggy path of repentance; climbing over rocks, seeking secure places in the sweat of our face, and expecting that the last step of our lives should be still a violent struggle to enter the narrow gate of eternity."

The way to heaven is the way of the Cross. Our great Forerunner went this way. This is the way the "innumerable multitude" went who are now before the throne. There is no other way for us. If we would shun the Cross as the source of salvation we are shut out of the way to heaven; and if we

would escape from bearing the cross, we forsake Christ, for He and the cross are inseparable, and if any man would be His disciple, he must take up his cross, and follow Him.

The way to heaven is a safe, holy, and happy way. Those who travel in it with tears rejoice in hope of the glory of God; with a burden to carry, they live in perpetual rest; in conflict they are victorious. "The way which leads to a throne is delightful, although it should be overgrown with thorns: the way which leads to a precipice is dreadful, although it should be covered with roses. We suffer, indeed, in the strait way, but we hope; we suffer, but we see heaven open; we suffer, but we choose to suffer; we love God, and are beloved of Him."

THE HOLIEST HAVE NEED OF CHRIST.

If the saints in heaven cannot be holy and happy *there* without Christ, how can we, even supposing we could be as holy as they, in this world of temptation, and in this body of corruption?

Upon this subject Wesley says, "In every state, we need Christ in the following respects:—1. Whatever grace we receive, it is a free gift from Him. 2. We receive it as His purchase, merely in consideration of the price He paid. 3. We have this grace not only from Christ, but in Him. For our perfection is not like that of a tree which flourishes by the sap derived from its own root, but like that of a branch, which, united to the vine, bears fruit, but, severed from it, is dried up and withered. 4. All our blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, depend on His intercession for us, which is one branch of His priestly office, whereof, therefore, we have always equal need. The best of men still need Christ in His priestly office to atone for their omissions, short comings (as some not improperly speak), their mistakes in judgment and practice, and their defects of various kinds. For these are all deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement."

VOLUNTARY THOUGHTS.

Keep a watch over your thoughts, and observe those which spontaneously, that is, voluntarily, arise in the mind. By this you may, to a great extent, judge the condition of your heart, in its motives, tendencies, purposes, hopes, fears, and wishes. "Voluntary thoughts," says Dr. Owen, "are the best measure and indication of the frame of our minds. As the nature of the soil is judged by the grace which it brings forth, so may the disposition of the heart by the predominancy of voluntary thoughts." As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. xxiii, 7).

THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN TRIALS.

It should be a great comfort to us in the trials of life to remember, that the goodness of God comes with them to sanctify them, and to give them a direction which shall promote our best welfare. The Psalmist, in thinking of his affliction, says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word." Again, in passing judgment upon the nature and reason of the affliction, he says, "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." See Ps. cxix.

If God, then, brings trials upon us in kindness, for our good, should we sorrow as though He meant it for our evil, and as though it actually promoted our evil? Does a father chastise his son? he does it, first, because he is his son; secondly, because he loves him; and thirdly, because he wishes to remove from him some existing evil, and produce in the stead thereof a good which shall serve his interests now and in subsequent life. Should the son fret under the operation? He may; but a right view of the evil chastised and the good intended, would ease his pain, and bring him to joyful submission. So with us in regard to the trials of life. Were a friend

in putting a diamond into your hand to cause a little annoyance, would you complain, when you knew that he meant to *give* you the diamond? Would you question his kindness or wisdom because he did not gently place it in your hand? Whatever pain you might feel, it would all be counterbalanced by the thought, the diamond is mine; and so you would lose sight of the *way* it came in the joy of having it, and in thankfulness to the munificent giver. Were you a bankrupt, and a friend offered you far more than you wanted, would you complain if, in the way of getting it, you were put to a trifling inconvenience? If you were in the midst of a severe conflict, would you murmur that you received a few strokes from the enemy, in obtaining the victory and getting the reward? Apply these thoughts to the trials of life from God.

MISTAKES WITH CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

Wesley defines Christian Perfection,—“The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love.” In reply to the inquiry, “Do you affirm that this perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance, and mistake?” he says, “I continually affirm quite the contrary, and always have done so.” And then to another inquiry, “But how can every thought, word, and work be governed by pure love, and the man be subject, at the same time, to ignorance and deceit?” He replies—“I see no contradiction here. A man may be filled with pure love, and still be liable to mistake. Indeed, I do not expect to be freed from actual mistake till this mortal puts on immortality. I believe this to be a natural consequence of the souls dwelling in flesh and blood. For we cannot now *think* at all but by the mediation of these bodily organs, which have suffered equally with the rest of our frame. And hence we cannot avoid sometimes *thinking wrong*, till this corruptible shall have put on incorruption. But we may carry this thought farther yet. A mistake in judgment may possibly

occasion a mistake in practice. For instance, Mr. De Renty's mistake touching the nature of mortification, arising from prejudice of education, occasioned that practical mistake, his wearing an iron girdle. And a thousand such instances there may be, even in those who are in the highest state of grace. Let where every word and action springs from love, such a mistake is not properly a sin. However, it cannot bear the rigour of God's justice, but needs the atoning blood." "I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions, which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. Therefore sinless perfection is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself. I believe a person filled with the love God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please; I do not, for the reasons above stated."

THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS.

Yes, He possesses the qualifications to give us that sympathy which we need. Looking at Him as God, we see all that is necessary on that side of His character; and looking at Him as Man, we see all that is necessary on that. In our nature He has lived in this world. During that period He acquired by experience a knowledge of the sorrows and temptations of life. He has travelled the whole journey of life, and there is nothing that can possibly come within the experience of any one of His followers as such, but He has passed through it.

With this experience He has gone into the holiest place as our High Priest to appear in the presence of God. Such a High Priest became us. With this experience He pleads with God for us, and exercises His sympathy towards us. As He bears us before His Father, and as He looks upon us in our life, He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." When the world, in a thousand temptations, would have us barter away our peace and comforts in religion for its hollow

pleasures and fleeting possessions, He knows the deception of the world, and the infirmity of our nature to withstand. When Satan would have us to sift us as wheat, He knows his subtlety and our danger. When we have, through weakness or forgetfulness, fallen into sin, He knows our frame, He remembers that we are but dust.

And what is the effect of all this sympathy? Is it mere sentimentalism going no further than the emotion, a thing without feeling or manifestation? No, blessed be His name. His sympathy is a power within Him; a power which acts; a power which yearns to make itself *known*. In its manifestation to us it takes the form of "mercy" to pardon, and "grace" to help in time of need." His greatest satisfaction is in *showing* His sympathy. He LOVES to have us make demands upon His sympathy. "Let us, THEREFORE, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace,"—unto Jesus, our High Priest—"THAT WE MAY OBTAIN MERCY AND FIND GRACE TO HELP IN TIME OF NEED" (Heb. iv, 16).

ANYTHING BUT THIS.

"Some other sorrow! Lord," I cried,
 "Thine arsenal of woe is wide;
 Lift from its gleaming rows
 Some blunter weapon! Pain, disease,
 And death are powerless till Thou please—
 All grief Thine impress knows.

"Well may my spirit faint with fear:
 This blessing lost—and earth lies drear:
 Take not my only joy!
 Think on past years of mournful pain;
 Oh let Thy love, with genial rain,
 Revive, and not destroy!"

From cloud-pavilions answer came:
 "Shall sinful man his Saviour blame?
 Wilt thou, O vine so frail!

Choose where the knife shall prune away
Tendrils that on thy life-sap prey,
And make thy clusters fail ?

“The closeness of thy twining grasp
Proves but the need of surly rasp,
Of wrenching swift and strong ;
To move away that precious thing,
The trellis where thy love-shoots cling :
Nor can the doom be wrong.

“This is thine idol. Fearful heart,
Christ reigns alone. If His thou art,
Know He will merely trim
Each vagrant love away, yet give
Strength by His own true word to live—
To lean on none but Him !”

Anon.

CHAPTER XXII.

(Twenty-second Meeting.)

CHRISTIAN REJOICING.

WE think that we must be always honest ; and so we must. But why do we not think that we must be always *happy* ? Should honesty be a more regular and fixed feature of our Christian character than happiness ? Why should the one be as the sun in its order and fixedness, and the other as the clouds in their changes ? There is not a more positive command in the Bible than this reiterated one :—“ Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and *again* I say, *rejoice*.” Observe, this rejoicing is not to be in the profits, companies, good prospects, and sunny days of this world, but “ *in the Lord*,—a rejoicing, independent of circumstances, as certain, as settled, and real

as the Lord Himself;—a rejoicing which the men of sense shall be compelled to confess is different in its nature and objects to theirs. The Christian may rejoice in all innocent things in which other men rejoice; but he is bound to rejoice where other men *cannot*.

“Who cannot rejoice when he holds his first-born in his breast? but, Christian, *you* are to rejoice when you bend with falling tears over his coffin. Weep! it is your right; but ‘rejoice in God.’

“Who cannot rejoice when he walks with his bride smiling beside him? But *you* are to rejoice when she lies stiffened in death on her bier.

“Do you say it is impossible for you thus, at will, to banish sorrow, and recall joy? It is *not* impossible. You cannot do it as you can will your eye to open or shut; but you can do it by controlling the course of things. You can live in such abiding consciousness of eternity, that time and the things thereof shall be to you but as pictures hung up in a hall, which may all be taken away without touching you. When losses come upon you, you may and ought to sorrow for pain of present bereavement; but you should rejoice with a joy which no man can take from you, in the promise that all of yours which is worth having will be restored to you, where it will be dearer and better than ever.

“Live so that your peace and joy shall be the ‘light’ that shall shine on men, showing them the power of religion *thus*, rather than by gloom of face and temper.”

UNGODLY COMPANY.

It is next to an impossibility for a Christian to retain his religion if he *will* associate with the ungodly. Any other reason, save that of *doing them good* or *necessary business*, will not justify him for entering into their company. The number of Christians contaminated, ruined, and lost to the Church from this one cause is fearful. The Holy Spirit in the Scriptures has not lost sight of this danger to the Christian; and

hence the frequent and strong language which He employs in speaking upon it:—

“I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat” (1 Cor. v, 11).

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. vi, 14—18).

“We command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thess. iii, 6, 14, 15).

What language can be plainer and more positive against Christians keeping company with the ungodly; and not only with the ungodly, but with inconsistent members of the Church?

THE HEART FOR GOD.

He asks this, and nothing else will meet His request. You may give him your occasional desires, thoughts, purposes. You may give Him your money in donations and subscriptions. You may give Him your presence in the Sunday services at His house. You may give Him your tongue in the repetition

of psalms, hymns, creeds, and prayers; but so long as you keep your *heart* from Him all these are vain offerings; He asks, Who hath required these things at your hands? "MY SON, GIVE ME THY HEART." This is the gift He asks. You cannot render Him this without the others following; but there is a possibility of rendering these, and that being withheld; and if that is withheld, where is the virtue, the power, the beauty, the acceptability of these?

Dr. South says, "The best sacrifice to a crucified Saviour is a crucified lust, a bleeding heart, and a dying corruption. Let the ambitious man lay his pride in the dust, the covetous man deposit his treasures in the banks of charity and liberality, and let the voluptuous epicure renounce his cups and feasts, and this will be a sacrifice to heaven, worth more than whole hecatombs."

MEEKNESS IN THE CHRISTIAN.

We may derive meekness from Jesus: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. xi, 29).

We are required to live in the spirit of meekness: "I Paul beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. x, 1). "That ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and MEEKNESS" (Eph. iv, 1).

Meekness is to be worn by us as a garment and an ornament, commending us to men and to God: "Put on MEEKNESS" (Col. iii, 12). "The ornament of a MEEK and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price" (1 Peter iii, 4).

In "the spirit of MEEKNESS," we must restore such as are "overtaken in a fault" (Gal. vi, 1).

"The MEEK will He guide in judgment: and the MEEK will He teach His way" (Ps. xxv, 9).

As Christians our meekness is to be manifest unto others: "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing MEEKNESS unto all men" (Titus iii, 2).

TRIBULATION.

You must not count it a strange thing that you meet with tribulation on your way to heaven. This is what the Saviour declares to be one portion of His disciples :—"In the world ye shall have tribulation." This is the common heritage of His saints in all ages and places. Your tribulation may be either in the mind, the body, or circumstances, or all combined. If it is in one only, thank God it is so partial; if in all, then it is so much more a trial of your faith. Whatever may be the extent of your tribulation, be assured of this, infinite wisdom permits it, and infinite goodness will lead it to a beneficial issue.

In the midst of your tribulation, keep your faith in its purity and vigour, resting on Christ. This will secure to you the "peace" which He says you shall have in Him. If, like Peter, you look to the boisterous waves and the raging winds, like him you will begin to sink in your tribulation, and require immediate Divine interposition to save you. Let your eye of faith rest on Him, and your hand of faith take hold of Him as your Keeper, as your Refuge, as your Deliverer; and in sacred peace you shall repose, just as He Himself did on the pillow at the stern of the ship, when it was driven about with the winds and tossed. As He holds the earth in its peaceful course, with all the storms that blow against it and over it; as He keeps the great depths of the ocean in stillness, while the billows roll and dash about on the surface; as He keeps the angels in peace within the walls of the New Jerusalem, while commotions rage without; so will He keep you in the midst of your tribulation. He whose mind is stayed upon Him He keeps in perfect peace. He sings as the foaming surges roll against him, one after another—

"Fearless their violence I dare;
They cannot harm, for God is here.
I own His power, accept the sign,
And shout to prove the Saviour mine."

CHRISTIAN DISSATISFACTION.

The dissatisfaction of the Christian arises from a different cause to that of the worldling. The one is dissatisfied because the things he pursues are incapable of yielding him satisfaction; they are fleeting, unsubstantial. The other is dissatisfied, because the greater his happiness, the greater becomes his capacity for bliss. The more he sees of himself, the more he sees of his own weakness, sinfulness, and necessities; the more he sees of God, the more he aspires after His strength, purity, and fulness. As he rises in the regions of the spiritual life towards heaven, the stronger his flight becomes, and the more penetrating his vision, so that in the same proportion he aims after the objects before him. While there is a *grace* of righteousness unacquired, a fruit of the spirit unproduced, a trait of the Divine image unattained, an iota of the Divine fulness unrealised, a duty unperformed, a temper unsanctified, an enemy unconquered, he is not satisfied. If he reach a point which he thought would have been the boundary of his progress, should the line be extended by the hand of God, however remote, *that* is the mark after which he again presses, and not until God shall have said to him, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther," will he be satisfied. "Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake up in Thy likeness." "In Thy presence is *FULNESS* of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

My brother, is this the dissatisfaction you feel? Do you drink in so much of the sweetness of grace that your thirst becomes more intense for larger draughts? Do you run so fast in the "race set before you" that you are the more eager to reach the goal? Do you see such glorious beauties in Jesus, that you are the more ambitious to see Him as He is, and to be like Him?

"My soul for *ALL* Thy *FULNESS* cries,
For *ALL* Thou *HAST* and *ART*."

SEEKING HAPPINESS.

"Seeking happiness," is a phrase which may very aptly apply to the worldling; but there is no just application of it to the Christian. Having no happiness in himself, the worldling is ever seeking it in some thing which is beyond himself; but the Christian possesses it within his heart, and hence he has no need to be *seeking* it. The one is like a family whose supply of water is at a distance, and must *go* to obtain it; the other is like a family whose supply is in the house in which it lives, and may draw as it needs. He that seeketh the happiness of this world, if he find it, shall thirst again; but that which dwells in the Christian is a "well of water springing up unto everlasting life." He has no need to ask for it or to seek it. It is "*in him*." He has no need to complain of scarcity or dearth. It is a "*well*" "SPRINGING up unto everlasting life," always rising, flowing, and increasing, until it reaches the ocean of eternity. The Christian's business is to seek *holiness* rather than happiness.

REDEMPTION IN THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

How can we afford to dispense with the blood of Jesus, when everything that is pure, precious, and heavenly, comes to us only through that? "In whom we have redemption THROUGH HIS BLOOD, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. i, 7). "Being justified freely by His grace THROUGH THE REDEMPTION that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii, 24). "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by HIS OWN BLOOD He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. ix, 12). "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot" (1 Pet. i, 18, 19). "The BLOOD OF JESUS, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i, 7). The inhabitants in

heaven sing of the blood :—"Thou hast redeemed us to God by THY BLOOD out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," (Rev. v, 9).

If the Jew thought so much of the blood of his *animal* sacrifice, what might we think of the blood of the sacrifice of GOD'S OWN SON? If the glorified in heaven trust in the blood, and sing of it, shall we on earth be unbelieving and silent?

TEMPTATION AFTER A BLESSING.

Satan in his temptations is very much like his human agents. Some men make it a study to ascertain when persons have been receiving their wages or payments of debts, or drawing upon the bank, and then, by some means, try to rob them of their possession.

It is thus our adversary watches our transactions with Heaven, to know when we obtain any special token of good. He will then bend all his force and cunning against us, with a view to rob us of our treasure. He will try to lift us up with vanity, foster self-confidence, create a carelessness in the use of the good we have, or in the holding of it; produce a Laodicean self-complaisance, that we are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; lead us into the harbour of carnal security; or draw us into a licentious application of the grace we enjoy.

In these various ways he will try to rob us of the blessing. If ever we need to watch more vigilantly at one time than another it is *after* we have been enriched with some blessing from above. The tradesman makes his shop secure according to the value of his stock. The traveller is most on his guard against the thief when he has the largest amount on his person. The workman is more careful how he walks the higher the scaffolding or building on which he stands. Let us learn lessons of them in regard to our watchfulness against Satan, after the receiving of some particular manifestation of gracious favours from God.

"Satan, like a pirate," says T. Watson, "sets on a ship that

is richly laden ; so when a soul hath been laden with spiritual comforts, now the devil will be shooting at time to rob him of all. The devil envies to see a soul feasted with spiritual joy. Joseph's party-coloured coat made his brethren envy him, and plot against him. After David had the good news of the pardon of his sin (which must needs fill with consolation), Satan presently tempted him to a new sin in numbering the people ; and so all his comfort leaked out and was spilt."

THE TIME OF CONVERSION.

However desirable it may be to be able to recall to mind the place, the day, and the hour of our conversion to God, this, after all, is not of the *greatest* importance in religion. Why should we doubt our entrance into the spiritual life, because we do not know the precise time of our new birth ? Does a man doubt as to whether he is living because he has no knowledge of the hour of his birth ? He has the *consciousness* of life, the *senses* of life, the *associations* of life, the *hopes, joys, cares, responsibilities, and labours* of life. These are *sufficient* to satisfy him that he has been born, and that he *now* lives.

Suppose, then, for a moment, you cannot tell from experience *when* you were "born again from above," is that any evidence that you are not born again at all ? Most assuredly not. If you feel the Spirit of God within you now, giving the senses, the associations, the hopes, the joys, the labours, &c., of the Divine life ;—these are evidences enough to satisfy you that you are *living* in religion ; and you could not be living now without having been previously born.

"Some voyagers homeward," says Boardman, "trouble themselves all the live-long voyage, clear to the very haven of rest, with doubts whether, after all, they have really set sail or not, because they had not the same struggles and difficulties in hoisting anchor and getting the canvass spread to the breezes of heaven, that others describe ! Surely it should be enough that they are on shipboard, with anchor up, sails set, steamer working, outward bound, ploughing the deep at the rate of

fifteen knots an hour ; What if they did set out in the night time, or in a fog ? Is it not enough that the captain and the pilot knew how to find the way, and that they are now out in the sunlight, on the open sea, and bounding over the billows ' to the desired haven ? ' ”

KEEPING IN THE FOLD.

“ Unless the fold we first forsake,
The wolf can never harm.”

Nothing can be truer than this. Within the fold of Christ, you are as safe as you would be within the walls of the New Jerusalem. Living under His eye, feeding upon His pasture, protected by His arm, and following His voice, what wolf of hell or of earth can touch you ? Your Shepherd must be harmed before you are. He must be conquered ere you can be touched : and is there any power in heaven, earth, or hell, that is more than a match for His ? Did any weapon formed against His sheep ever prosper ? Did any evil spirit, however subtle, wicked, or mighty, ever snatch one out of His hands ? Never. If Satan, the wolf, has ever harmed one of the Good Shepherd's sheep, or carried one away, and fed his hellish appetite upon it, it has been when the sheep has thoughtlessly, prayerlessly, or through some enticing influence, forsaken the fold, and gone into forbidden land ; gone from the immediate care and protection of the Great Shepherd. Retain your connection with Christ and also with His people, and you need not fear any injury from the enemy. He may be near you, but Christ is nearer. He may watch you with the closest vigilance, but Christ watches you with an omniscient and an omnipresent eye. He may employ great cunning and power to ensnare you, but Christ will exercise infinite wisdom and power to preserve you. He may command legions of invisible agents with the visible ones to draw you, but Christ will cover the mountain with chariots of fire and horsemen of fire to encompass you, and they shall all be confounded. Yes ;

as the wolf cannot injure an angel in heaven, so he cannot harm you, WHILE ENCLOSED IN THE FOLD OF THE BLESSED REDEEMER!

CONFIDENCE IN JESUS.

Why should I fear the darkest hour,
Or tremble at the tempest's power?
Jesus vouchsafes to be my *Tower*!

Though hot the fight, why quit the field?
Why must I either flee or yield,
Since Jesus is my mighty *Shield*?

When creature comforts fade and die,
Worldlings may weep, but why should I?
Jesus still lives, and still is *nigh*!

I know not what may soon betide,
Nor how my wants may be supplied:
But Jesus knows, and *will provide*.

Though sin would fill me with distress,
The Throne of Grace I dare address;
For Jesus is my *Righteousness*.

Though faint my prayers, and cold my love,
My steadfast hope shall not remove
While Jesus *intercedes* above.

Against me earth and hell combine,
But on my side is power Divine;
Jesus is *all*, and He is *mine*.

CHAPTER XXIII.

(*Twenty-third Meeting.*)

WEAK FAITH.

THANK God for any faith at all. Weak faith is better than no faith. It is as much faith in its nature as though it was strong enough to move mountains; just as a spark is fire, or a ray light, or a farthing money. The spark may be kindled into a flame, the ray increase into a body of light, and the farthing accumulate into pounds.

Faith is the *foot* by which we go to Jesus. The foot may be lame, or it may be the foot of an infant, still, if it suffice to bring you, rejoice.

Faith is the *hand* with which we lay hold of Jesus. Yet if it be a trembling hand, it is a hand with which you may touch the hem of His garment and be made whole; not by your faith as the cause, but by the virtue which comes out of Him.

Faith is the *tongue* with which we speak to Jesus, and taste the goodness of His grace. And although it may be a feverish tongue, or defective in its articulation, yet it may say enough to make Him understand what you want, and taste enough to give you a longing for more.

Faith is the *eye* with which we see Jesus; and notwithstanding it is dim in its vision, or short-sighted in its powers, it may see Him as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

You may perceive, then, from these thoughts, that though your faith is a weak faith, you may value it, and take encouragement. The weaker an eye, the more careful the man is of it; the lame foot has particular attention paid to it; so you must nurse and encourage your weak faith, that it may get stronger. He who has but a dim eyesight, how thankful

he is that he can see at all, when he thinks of the misery of total blindness; and the man that walks limping, how thankful he is that he can walk any way, when he remembers that there are those who are entirely paralysed; so you should be thankful for even a weak faith, when you think of the myriads who are possessed of nothing but damning unbelief!

CHRISTIAN LOVE.

Love is, indeed, a transcendent excellence, an essential and sovereign good; it makes the heavy burden light, and the rugged path smooth; it bears all things without feeling their weight, and from every adversity takes away the sting.

Divine love is noble and generous, prompting to difficult attempts, and kindling desire for greater perfection; it continually looks up to heaven and pants after its original and native freedom; and, lest its intellectual eye should be darkened by earthly objects, and its will captivated by earthly good, or subdued by earthly evil, sighs for deliverance from this fallen world.

Love surpasseth all sweetness, strength, height, depth, and breadth; nothing is more pleasing; nothing more full, nothing more excellent in heaven or in earth; for "love is born of God;" and it cannot find rest in created things, but resteth only in Him from whom it is derived.

Love is rapid in its motion as the bolt of heaven; it acts with ardour, alacrity, and freedom, and no created power is able to obstruct its course. It giveth all for all, and possesseth all in all; for it possesseth the Supreme Good, from whom, as from its fountain, all good eternally proceeds. It respecteth no gifts, but, transcending all imparted excellence, turneth wholly to the Giver of every perfect gift.

Love knows no limits, feels no burden, considers no labour; it desires to do no more than, in its present state, it finds itself able to effect; yet it is never restrained by apparent impossibility, but conceives that all things are possible, and that all are lawful; it, therefore, attempts every labour, however diffi-

cult, and accomplishes many, under which the soul that loves not faints and falls prostrate.

Love is watchful, and, though it slumbereth, doth not sleep; it is often fatigued, but never exhausted; straitened, but not enslaved; alarmed by danger, but not confounded; and, like a vigorous and active flame, ever bursting upward, securely passeth through all opposition.

He that loveth feels the force of this exclamation: "My God, my Love! Thou art wholly mine, and I am wholly Thine!" and when this is the voice of love, it reacheth unto heaven.

Love delights in the communication of good; and, with a swiftness equal to thought, diffuses its blessings with impartiality and ardour. It is courageous and patient, faithful and prudent, long-suffering and generous.

Love is circumspect, humble, and equitable; not soft, effeminate, sickly and vain, but sober, chaste, constant, persevering, peaceful, and free from the influence of sensible objects. It is submissive and obedient to all, mean and contemptible in its own esteem, devout and thankful to God, and resigned even when His consolations are suspended, being faithfully dependent upon His mercy; for, in this fallen life, love is not exempt from pain.

He, therefore, that is not prepared to suffer all things, and, renouncing his own will, to adhere invariably to the will of his beloved, is unworthy of the name of lover. It is essential to that exalted character, to endure the severest labours and the bitterest afflictions, and to let nothing in created nature turn him aside from the supreme and infinite good.—*Kempis*.

DANGER AND SECURITY.

It is well for us to know when we are in danger, then where the danger lies, and next where our security is. Let us learn a lesson from the snail. It goes forth carrying its house upon its back, creeping most circumspectly along. As it goes it stretches forth its feelers to ascertain if the way is clear, and

the least touch of anything drives it back into its shell for protection and security. As we travel on to heaven, let us take God with us as our Refuge; and as we move along let us exercise the prudence, the foresight, the keen spiritual apprehension of indwelling truth, to discern the least danger which may arise from self, Satan, company, or any quarter; and the moment we are exposed, let us fly back to our Refuge. We are safe in Him. The poor snail may be crushed in its shell by the tread of the first passenger on the way; but what power can destroy *us* when we are encompassed with the almightiness of God?

THE HELP OF THE LORD.

Do not forget that the Lord renders help to them that *use the means to obtain His help*. To expect His help in any other way is *presumption*. To look for His help through the means which He has appointed, is *faith*; and faith, too, which shall be honoured with the reward promised. "The Lord shall help them and deliver them, *because* they trust in Him." Here you see it is *a trust in God* that secures His help. "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Here we see it is *coming to God in prayer* that realises His help. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

If, then, you desire His help in the duties and trials of life, *use the means*, and He will give it you. As nature helps them that help themselves, so the God of grace helps all His people who look to Him through faith and prayer.

THE TREMBLING CHRISTIAN.

Give not way to the tormenting fears and doubts of your heart, nor yield to the disturbing suggestions of Satan. Wait upon God; He shall strengthen your heart. Charge your soul to be quiet in the presence of the Lord. You are in the dark, and, like a child, you fear where there is no fear, and

tremble where there is no danger. Remember your Father is with you, and though you cannot see Him the fact is all the same. Stand still if you dare not move, and you shall see the salvation of God. If you cannot sail because of the darkness, cast anchor, as did Paul's mariners, and wish for the breaking of the day.

Fearful, trembling one! encourage yourself in the promises. You are tossed about on the waters as the disciples were on Lake Geneserath; but remember Jesus is on the Mount praying for you, and looking down upon you. By-and-bye He will come and hush the winds and calm the waves, and say, "Peace, be still." But can you not, by faith, now lay your aching heart upon the bosom of your Lord, as the beloved John laid his? Or, if you feel you dare not venture thus far, then go and lay yourself at His feet, and in the utterance of full submission, tell Him *if you perish, you will perish there*. Leave yourself with Him. Though He tarry a while, yet wait for Him. He shall speak to you the comforts of love, and raise you with the hand of kindness. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. xxxi, 3). "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa. lxii, 5). "He shall command His loving-kindness in the daytime" (Ps. xlii, 8).

THE DIRECT WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

Rest satisfied with nothing less than the *direct* testimony of the Spirit that you are a child of God. If you purchase a piece of land or any other kind of property, you are not satisfied with a simple inference that it is yours, nor with your own consciousness that you have paid the money for it, nor even with the man's own verbal declaration from whom you have made the purchase. Nothing less than the legally written document *signed and sealed*, gives you satisfaction and security. In the matter of your salvation shall anything less than the Spirit's direct witness suffice? You want more than your own consciousness that you have believed, more than the written word

telling you, "He that believeth shall be saved." You want the Spirit of God *Himself* to come into your heart, and there with His own hand to write and seal the glorious fact.

This you may have, if, as yet, you do not possess it. To give you a title-deed beyond all dispute, which shall ensure to you and to the high-court of heaven that you are an heir and have a right to the inheritance, God has provided in the system of grace to send forth His own Spirit into your heart, to bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God, and if a child, then an heir, and if an heir, then to give you a title to the purchased possession.

In living with anything short of this, you fail to realize the full blessedness of a child of God. But with this, doubt expires, and the assurance of hope, and faith, and joy, becomes yours. You have the "roll" in your bosom which, carrying with you to the gate of the celestial city, shall admit you into the promised and prepared heritage of the children of God for ever.

"Short of Thy love I would not stop,
A stranger to the Gospel hope,
The sense of sins forgiven ;
I would not, Lord, my soul deceive,
Without the INWARD WITNESS live,
That antepast of heaven."

THE GOOD OF ADVERSITY.

"The bee sucks sweet honey," says Thomas Brooks, "out of the bitterest herb ; so God will, by afflictions, teach His children to suck sweet knowledge, sweet obedience, and sweet experience, out of all the bitter afflictions and trials He exercises them with ; that scouring and rubbing which frets others, shall make them shine the brighter ; that weight which crushes and keeps others under, shall but make them, like the palm-tree, grow better and higher : torches give the best light when beaten ; grapes yield most wine when most pressed ; spices smell sweetest when pounded ; vines are

the better for bleeding ; gold looks the brighter for scouring ; and juniper smells sweetest in the fire. Afflictions are the saints' best benefactors. Where afflictions hang heaviest corruptions hang loosest. Grace that is hid in nature, as sweet water in rose-leaves, is then the most fragrant when the fire of affliction is put under to distil it out. Grace shines the brighter for scouring, and is most glorious when it is most clouded."

DESIRING THE GRACE OF CHRIST.

Is your soul burning with an intense thirst for the grace of Christ to renew and sanctify it ? Then listen to the invitation you have to partake of it. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1). "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii, 37, 38). "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end ; I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. xxi, 6). "And let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii, 17).

You need not thirst another moment. There is the fulness of Christ *now* offered you.

DESIRING HEAVEN.

We ought to ascertain, as far as possible, the nature of the motive that creates the desire for heaven. If we wish heaven for what there is in it, does it not manifest a selfishness which is inconsistent with the disinterestedness of the Gospel ? If we desire it to be relieved from the toils, cares, sufferings of life, does not this also exhibit a degree of the same spirit, while it involves an impatience under the discipline of time, which is contrary to the waiting spirit of the Gospel. If heaven is desired at all by us, it should be desired, first,

because it is a place of holiness, and, secondly, because it is the abode of Jesus. The chief object, however, of the Christian's desire on earth should be holiness, as the nature and image of God; and heaven, in subordination, as a place in which this holiness shall attain its consummate state, and therein display the glory of God the Father, through the mediation of God the Son, by the agency of God the Holy Spirit. If this is the motive which excites the desire for heaven, then it will, as naturally as a cause produces an effect, lead you to prepare for heaven, and ensure you a possession of it for ever. The company, pleasures, crowns, harps, visions, and all other things of which we talk and sing so much, are as sure to you as they are promised. On the other hand, you may desire heaven from questionable motives, and neither desires nor motives may lead you to prepare for it, and hence, with all your desires, you may fail to possess it, simply because you fail to possess the preparation. Let it then, be your main endeavour to "follow holiness," and this will inevitably bring you to heaven. This is the king's highway to His own palace and throne. It conducts to no other end.

SPIRITUAL DEARTH.

You lament over your spiritual dearth. This a just cause of lamentation. You have been planted in the house of our God, in the vineyard of the Lord, by the river of the means of grace, with a view to bring forth *much* fruit, and if you are yielding little or none, it is indeed ground for deep mourning before God. Angels mourn over it. Christians alive to God, and who know, mourn over it. Above all, there is One who, perhaps, has sought fruit these many days, if not years, but found none, mourns over it. And *He* has the power to do what no angel or Christian can,—to cut you down as a tree that cumber the ground, because of its long fruitlessness. I trust that this confession and lament of spiritual dearth, will lead you to more spiritual life and vigour, from which fruit may grow to the glory of God.

Why are you a barren tree, with nothing but the leaves of a fair profession? There must be a cause. Here are some close to you, in the same church, who produce fruit which the great Head receives. If you use the same means, and have not the same grace, does not this arise from a defective use of the means? Or, if you have the same means, but not the same opportunities of attending them, then it becomes an inquiry, whether you endeavour to make all the opportunities you can, and having them, whether you use them to the greatest advantage? How of the means at home? Are these used with a view to make you spiritually fruitful? The public means, are they used with the same object before you? Look *within*, my brother. There may be a serious defect in the heart. A tree in an orchard may have all the external advantages of a neighbouring tree, and yet be unfruitful. The real cause, when ascertained, is found to be in the *heart*, or in the *root*. Are you dearthy, because the heart is worldly, unbelieving, proud, self-righteous, lukewarm? Study to find out the cause. It is a solemn matter. God is only glorified in bearing *much* fruit. Jesus cursed the fig-tree because it was fruitless, and it *withered away*, and LIVED NO MORE.

THE GOURD.

As once for Jonah, so the Lord,
To soothe and cheer my mournful hours,
Prepared for me a pleasing gourd,
Cool was its shade, and sweet its flowers.
To prize this gift was surely right;
But through the folly of my heart,
It hid the Giver from my sight,
And soon my joy was changed to smart.
While I admired its beauteous form,
Its pleasant shade and grateful fruit;
The Lord, displeased, sent forth a worm,
Unseen to prey upon the root.

I trembled when I saw it fade,
But guilt restrained the murmuring word ;
My folly I confess'd, and pray'd,
Forgive my sin, and spare my gourd.

His wondrous love can ne'er be told,
He heard me and relieved my pain ;
His word the threatening worm controll'd,
And bid my gourd revive again.

Now, Lord, my gourd is mine no more ;
'Tis thine, who only could'st it raise ;
The idol of my heart before,
Henceforth shall flourish to Thy praise.

John Newton.

CHAPTER XXIV.

(Twenty-fourth Meeting.)

INFLUENCE OF FAITH UPON US.

A TRUE Gospel, saving faith, is an active principle within us, and exercises a similar influence upon us to that of a quick and observing sight of outward things in life and nature. "If the things of another world were quite as clear and plain to us as the things of this world,—if we were always quite as conscious of their presence and reality, as we are of the presence and reality of the visible things which surround us,—how could we help living and acting for those all-important things ! If we could actually see God's eye fixed upon us, if we could *see* Christ walking among us, if we could *see* the angels winging to and fro on their messages of mercy ; if heaven stood clear and open before us as the landscape on which we gaze ; if hell yawned in all its hideous terrors beneath our feet ; if we saw

the evil spirit's malignant eye, as he put before us his subtle temptation to sin,—Oh! how easy would it be to do right, how all but impossible to go wrong. And if we had a faith strong enough to bring home these things to our souls, a faith which would keep them ever before us in their awful and utter reality, so too would be these. As naturally should we turn aside from evil and follow the path that leads to life, as a man, in walking along a road, would bend his steps aside to avoid some obstacle in his way, and follow the direction in which he wished to go."

THE DIVINE PRESENCE IN THE MEANS.

However numerous, beautiful, well-connected, conveniently appointed, and wisely conducted the religious means may be, they are of no real, lasting spiritual good to us, if the Divine Presence is absent from them. It was not the mercy-seat, the rod of Aaron, the cherubim, the high priest, that rendered the holy place in the temple so awfully sacred, and the medium of such gracious communications to the people. *It was the presence of Jehovah.* It is the presence of God pervading all things in nature, that gives to them their beauty, life, power, goodness, and utility. He absent, nature would be useless, even if it existed. It is the spirit of life in man, that gives to his eye its vision, his limbs their activity, his mind its action, his form its symmetry, comeliness, dignity. That wanting, he soon becomes inert, and needs to be carried to his own place,—the dust. As was the presence of God in the Holy of holies, and as is the presence of God in nature, and the spirit of life in man; so is the presence of God in all the means of the Church. He is their life, their unity, their strength, their solemnity, their usefulness. Without Him they are dry channels; dead trees; dormant bodies; dark lamps. But when He is in them, they are wells of salvation, from which we may draw with joyfulness; they are flowing, crystal-like rivers of the water of life, of which we may drink and be refreshed; they are Bethesdas, into which we may plunge and be healed

of whatsoever disease we have; they are Bethels, where we may see the Mediator as the ladder between heaven and earth; they are the armoury, where we may "put on the whole armour of God;" they are resting-places and banqueting houses, where we may derive invigoration on our way to the New Jerusalem.

Seeing, then, that His presence is so essential to the life and power of the means, let us, as the first thing, in the use of them, beseech Him to be in them. Let us use them in the spirit of faith and holy expectation. Have we not His word on which to rely?—that He will be with them assembled in His name? that where His name is recorded there He will come? that His word shall not return unto Him void? Meeting Him in the means, will give us an interest in them and a good from them which nothing else can.

CHRISTIAN LOVE AND UNITY.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm cxxxiii).

"He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him" (1 John ii, 10).

"By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii, 35).

"Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Cor. xiii, 11).

"Be of the same mind one toward another" (Rom. xii, 16).

"I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. i, 10).

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv, 3).

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. ii, 2).

"Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous" (1 Pet. iii, 8).

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John xvii, 20, 21).

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God: and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John iv, 7).

"The multitude of them were of one heart and soul. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts ii, 49).

JESUS LIVES.

Earthly friendships dissolve; earthly comforts dry up; earthly possessions fail; earthly life vanishes; but JESUS LIVES! Blessed thought to the Christian! to whom He is life, peace, hope, joy, purity, all and in all. *Jesus lives!* He lives in heaven, preparing a place for you, and waiting till the fulness of time shall come, to take you to Himself, that where He is there may you be also. He lives to think of you, to intercede for you, to sympathise with you, to send upon you the Holy Ghost, to communicate constant supplies of grace in your times of need, to guide you through all the scenes of this mortal life, to bring you safe into His glorious presence, and to crown you with honour, glory, immortality, eternal life. How unspeakably blessed are you, my brother, to have such an interest in such a Saviour. With Him living, and your interest living in Him, you may joyfully endure all the changes and losses of this uncertain world.

DO SOMETHING.

"There is nothing more troublesome," says Bishop Hall, "to a good man than to do nothing. For besides the furtherance of our estate, the mind doth delight and better itself with exercise. There is but this difference, then, betwixt labour and idleness, that labour is a profitable and pleasant trouble, idleness a trouble both unprofitable and comfortless. I will be ever doing something; that either God when He cometh or Satan when he tempteth, may find me busied. And yet since—as the old proverb is—better it is to be idle than effect nothing, I will not more hate doing nothing than doing something to no purpose. I shall do good but a while; let me strive to do it while I may."

THE RETURNING BACKSLIDER.

If you consider the numbers who have forsaken God, to whom is applicable those solemn words of the Apostle: "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame;"—it is indeed a mercy of mercies that *you* have ceased to crucify Him afresh and put Him to an open shame; that you have looked upon Him whom you have pierced and mourned: that you are tired of the "broken cisterns;" and coming again to the "Fountain of Living Waters;" that you have found out your miserable, starving condition in the "far country," and have arisen and are on your way back to your Father's house, board, protection, and family. I say this is a mercy of mercies. And while on the one hand you have reasons for bedewing every inch of the way with your penitential tears, you have reasons for filling the air with penitential utterances of earnest thanks. O the boundless grace of God! I scarcely know which feeling should be strongest in you, penitence for your backsliding sins, or thanks for the infinite unmerited mercy of God.

Well, then, we thank God for your return to Him and His

people. And now be sure and let not Satan hold you from coming all the way, by reminding you of your sins, and of several passages of Scripture which seem against backsliders. As you are on the way of return to your Father, push on for your life. Tarry not at any spot, until you fall into His open arms. Remember He is coming to meet you. Christ in heaven intercedes for you. The Spirit on earth guides you. Angels rejoice to see you come. Christians welcome you with affection. O what sympathies are thrown around you in your return to former bliss in religion! What cords of love are drawing you! "Return, thou backsliding Israel," saith the Lord, "and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever." "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous."

A SENSE OF UNWORTHINESS.

It is good for us to cultivate a sense of unworthiness before God. It is a check to pride, to self-confidence, to self-righteousness. It fosters a spirit of humility, which ever becomes us—a spirit of prayer, which is essential to Christian life,—a spirit of reliance upon God in the use of the means for all those blessings which in our unworthiness we feel we so much need,—a spirit of high appreciation of the love and goodness of God in the bestowment of His favours upon us.

While, however, we cherish a sense of our unworthiness as arising out of our sins, unfaithfulness, and imperfections, let us guard against a despairing or discouraging state of mind. Let us not forget that, however unworthy, we may indulge the hope of salvation. We have a claim upon the blessings of grace in all their amplitude and sufficiency. Christ has loved us and given Himself for us. We are in Him and He is in us, by faith. While, then, on the one hand, in ourselves, we are filled with unworthiness, and covered with ill-desert; on the other, in Jesus, we are covered with the garments of praise and the beauty of holiness; we are filled with the light

of the truth and the nature of Divinity. Apart from Jesus God could exclude us from hope, debar us of heaven, and consign us to endless death ; but IN JESUS, He can, yea He will, reckon us among His jewels, welcome us into His presence, and secure us against hell.

By all means let us cherish a sense of unworthiness in ourselves ; but let us not fail as diligently to cultivate a sense of our worthiness in Christ. Let us cling to Him. We cannot sink while we have hold of Him. There is no man, or angel, or devil, or even God Himself, can exclude us from grace or glory, while we are in Christ and Christ is in us.

OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST.

It is a great mistake to suppose that obedience to Christ is servitude. *Compelled* obedience may be so ; like fastening a chain to the spirit, which continually binds and torments it. But this is not Christian obedience. He who obeys his Saviour from love does so *willingly*. He is fully resigned to Him in all things. It is therefore his *pleasure*. It yields him the greatest joy to know that he is keeping his Lord's commandments.

That man must have singular notions of the inner life of love, who imagines that obedience which arises from affection, and revolves constantly within the circle of the Divine will, partakes of the nature of servitude. No, blessed be God, such obedience is the highest liberty, and the noblest enjoyment. He only has attained the essence of true freedom whose obedience to Christ is the flowing out of his affections to Him, as the gushing of water from a full fountain.

RECEIVING PARDON.

In how many different ways do penitents receive a sense of forgiving mercy ! One, while he is hearing the Word ; another, while he is in the exercise of prayer ; a third, while in the pursuit of his daily calling ; a fourth, in the midnight hour, &c. God has no set method. The pardon is the same ; but the time, place, mode of sending it vary. Cowper, the

poet, obtained it while reading Rom. iii, 25 : "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." "Immediately," he says, "I received strength to believe, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, my pardon sealed in His blood, and all the fulness and completeness of His justification. In a moment I believed and received the Gospel."

RESIGNATION TO GOD.

If you are a child of God it should not be an irksome duty, but a holy privilege, to bow in resignation to His will. Your confidence in Him, and love to Him ought to make it so. In this you will realise what Montgomery defines resignation, *the Sabbath of the soul*. Anything besides this will be its *week day*, implying toil, care, anxiety, change; but this will imply peace, tranquillity, devotion, rest. Your Father, who is in heaven, might come and take your person, and place it in the furnace where the flesh shall quiver in its flames, but if resigned, the soul will have this Sabbath. He may come and take away your most valuable earthly treasure, but, if resigned, you will be happy even in the loss of it. In a word, resigned to God, you will regard nothing as your own. All will be His, and you will consider that He has a perfect right to do as He pleases with His own. In the Sabbath of your soul you will say as one of the Church's sweetest poets expresses:

"Since 'tis Thy sentence I should part
With the most precious treasures of my heart,
I freely that and more resign;
My heart itself, as its delight, is Thine.
My little all I give to thee:
Thou gav'st a greater gift, Thy Son, to me.
Take all, great God! I will not grieve;
But still will wish that I had still to give.

I hear Thy voice ; Thou bidd'st me quit
My paradise ; I bless and do submit ;
I will not murmur at Thy word,
Nor beg Thy angel to sheath up his sword."

O how beautiful, how comely, how angel-like, yea, how Christ-like, is this spirit! When is the infant more happy, more secure, more lovely, than when it reposes in its parent's arms? It is when we resign ourselves and our all into the arms of our Almighty Father, that we resemble the infant in happiness, security, and loveliness. Then it is we celebrate a delightful Sabbath in our souls.

HOPE BEYOND THIS LIFE.

Whatever may be the views and feelings of the mere secularist and worldling, the Christian believes as St. Paul declares, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." If your hope as a Christian was bounded by the near and short horizon of time, what would you have to contribute to your happiness? You have left the sources of happiness which this world opens, in hope of drinking of those which spring from the throne of God and the Lamb; but if your hope in Christ only extends to this life, you have given up at least a temporary certainty for a future phantom. You have forsaken the company of the gay and happy of this world, in hope of joining the higher and nobler society of the realms of heaven; but if your hope in Christ is only a hope "in this life," you have forsaken the living and real for what is worse than mere fancy and dreams. And so your hope, though in Christ, does not conduce to your happiness, but your misery. You are the gloomiest of the gloomy. They who say, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die," are in a paradise of felicity to what you are. "Of all men we are most miserable." But thanks be to God, if you have the real hope of the Gospel, it not only extends its vision and reach to its proper objects now in time, but it goes

far far beyond into the future life, beyond the dark valley. Threescore years and ten cannot limit its life and exercise; its anticipations reach into the glorious and endless life of God in heaven. Above the crowns, sceptres, thrones, palaces, suns, stars, and planets of this system, it towers into and ranges among the kingdoms, crowns, thrones, mansions, and wealth of eternity. From the society of nobles, kings, and all the great of earth's families, it seeks company with the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven. Away from the shallow streams of this world's happiness, it goes and drinks of rivers of pleasure which flow at God's right hand for evermore. Thus the Christian's hope in Christ flies beyond "this life," and, instead of making him of all men "most miserable," it makes him of all men *most happy*.

" IS IT WELL ?"

Traveller through these scenes of sorrow,
Weary with the march of life;
Hoping nothing for the morrow
But renewed and ceaseless strife:
In thy sky no ray of gladness
Of a brighter day to tell,
Overwhelmed with grief and sadness,
Weary traveller, " Is it well ?"

Storm and tempest howl around thee,
Clouds obscure thy toilsome way;
Gloom, and night, and fear, surround thee,
Yet for light thou may'st not stay;
Onward, 'mid the darkness groping,
Struggling through life's deepest dell,
Scarce to reach its outlet hoping;
Trembling pilgrim, " Is it well ?"

" Is it well" that God has taken
All that thou had'st deemed thine own ?

"Is it well" that grief has shaken
 Hope for ever from her throne?
 Death has of thy friends bereft thee,
 Borne them to the grave's dark cell;
 Not an earthly joy is left thee,—
 Answer Christian, "Is it well?"

Canst thou still with meek submission
 Kiss the hand that wields the rod?
 See'st thou with faith's trusting vision,
 Love in all that comes from God?
 Is there rest for thee in heaven?
 Hop'st thou there with Christ to dwell?
 Ah! howe'er by tempests driven,
Then, believer, "It is well!"

Anon.

CHAPTER XXV.

(Twenty-fifth Meeting.)

NEARNESS OF SATAN.

IF Satan had such near access to Job, to David, and even to the Son of God Himself, you need not be surprised if you at times feel that he is near you. Let it be your endeavour to understand his devices, to discern his true character, so that you may know when he comes as an angel of light or as an angel of darkness. Be sure, also, that you have on, the whole armour of God—the sword of the spirit, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the girdle of truth, the sandals of peace, all prayer, supplication for all saints, and watching thereunto—and you may stand with as much calmness and courage as did the ruddy youth when Goliath of Gath approached him to give his carcass to the birds of the heavens; as did the Prince of Life when the devil came so

near to Him in the wilderness to win Him over to his kingdom; or as when he again entered into the garden to divert His progress to the altar of atonement. When the hosts of Syrians were so near Elisha at Dothan, he did not fear, though they were so many, and he was alone with his servant. Why? Because he saw the mountain filled with chariots and horses of fire, come to defend him. Satan with ten thousand powers from hell may surround you as though they would crush you as a giant an infant; but they cannot touch you; for see, the air is thronged with angel bands. They encompass, they watch, they fight, they preserve you secure. More are they that are for you, than all that are against you. Nay, suppose every angel was to fly to heaven, the One who would remain your Defence, would be infinitely more than ten thousand myriads of bellicious hosts, headed by Satan, that might be near you. The Psalmist could say, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident;" viz., "The Lord is my light, and my salvation; the Lord is the strength of my life." And you may say, Christian brother, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" "I am more than conqueror, through Him that hath loved me."

SEEKING SALVATION.

In inquiring after salvation it is important that you do not think more of this than you do of the Saviour. If your mind is fixed upon the deliverance, and not upon the Deliverer; if you desire especially the blessings included in salvation—pardon, peace, joy, hope, adoption, regeneration, holiness, and ultimately, heaven—but are indifferent about Him who bestows them, it is certain that you are yet in the way of error and need to be instructed in the first principles of the truth of the Gospel. I believe there are multitudes who, in seeking salvation, err at this very point. They see themselves lost, and are anxiously concerned to be saved, and think more about salva-

tion than Christ. They feel the power of their disease, and desire to be cured, and think more of the cure than of the physician.

Observe how the Scriptures direct the soul which is seeking salvation: "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, which taketh away the sins of the world." The object to behold is the Lamb of God, not the sins taken away. That is left to follow the sight of the object. "BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved;" not believe in salvation, but in Jesus, and salvation shall follow. "LOOK UNTO ME, and be ye saved;" not look unto salvation. Is not this plain to be understood? It perfectly accords with all the laws and doings of life. If you are sick you seek the doctor, and *in him*, or *through him*, restoration to health. If you are hungry or thirsty, you seek bread or water, and in *it* satisfaction. Were you enveloped in fire, you would cry out for some one to come to your help, and in that *some one* expect deliverance. Now, if you are desiring salvation, and all the blessings included therein, seek Christ, inquire for Him, look to Him, take hold of Him, and IN HIM is all you want. You cannot receive Christ without finding salvation, any more than you can have the cause without the effect, the fountain without the streams, the sun without the light; but you may seek salvation without finding Christ; but you cannot seek Christ without finding both Christ *and* salvation.

POSSESSION OF CHRIST.

To have Christ as our property, made over to us in the will of God, and held by the firm hand of a spirit-inspired faith, is to have more than all the world. O, how it should enrapture our souls with holy joy to own Him! To be able to say, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine," should give us a happiness and a dignity far beyond that which could flow from saying, "This mansion is mine, or this estate is mine, or this crown is mine, or this kingdom is mine." Christ is of that use and worth to us that these could never be. The Scriptures

are full of the highest and noblest figures to represent Him in His use to the believer. He is our Life, to quicken us; our Light, to illumine us; our Saviour, to deliver us; our Bread to feed us; our Drink, to refresh us; our Prophet, to teach us; our Wisdom, to direct us; our Priest, to mediate for us; our King, to govern us; our Captain, to order the battle for us; our Father, to love us; our Friend, to sympathise with us. In one word, He is our "All in all." And more than this, having Him as ours, we have a propriety in all that belongs to Him. All things are ours when He is ours, the apostle Paul teaches: life, death, the world, things present, things to come, Paul, Apollos, Cephas, God, angels, promises, &c. As Ambrose says, "Alas, I look on myself, and I see I am nothing; I have nothing without Jesus Christ. Here is temptation, I cannot resist it; here is a corruption I cannot overcome; here is a persecution, I cannot down with it. Well, but Christ is mine, I have an interest in Him, and I have possession of Him, and I find enough in Him to supply all my wants."

Surely, then, here is occasion for the soul's gladness. Well may the believer, who has such an interest in Christ, be called upon to "Rejoice in the Lord always;" to "Rejoice evermore;" to "Rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Well may he be called an "heir of God," a "joint heir with Christ," a "king and priest unto God;" "more excellent than his neighbour."

DOING GOOD TO OUR ENEMIES.

This is one sign of a true Christian. "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?" (Matt. v. 46, 47). To love them who love us is what every one can do; but to love them who hate us, speak evil of us, and persecute us, is peculiar to the follower of Jesus. It was said of Archbishop Cranmer, "Do the Archbishop of Canterbury a displeasure, and you shall ever have him your friend." Some of

his words dying were, "I had never any greater pleasure in all my life, than to forget and forgive injuries, and to show kindness to them that sought evil to me." "Consider," says Joseph Alleine, "them who have offended you, and disobliged you, and slighted you; and keep up good thoughts of them, if the case will bear it, speak nothing but good of them, pray for them, and wish well for them; 'so shall you be the children of your Father which is in heaven.'"

DARE TO BE SINGULAR.

Shun not any reproaches or persecution for Christ. If you are called to stand alone as His witness in the midst of multitudes who oppose Him and you, shrink not from the cross. Take it up, and be glad to be a follower of Him who stood alone in want, in temptation, in sorrow, in agony, in death, for you. Think of Abel being singular for God, of Enoch, of Abraham, of Moses, of Elijah, of Daniel, of Paul, and hosts of others.

If you are singular in your shame for Christ, you shall not be in the glory with which He shall crown you, unless it is in the superior measure that shall rest upon you.

If you see men daring to be singular in vice, in vanity, in the general service of sin, will you fear to be so in "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report?" (Phil. iv, 8).

A dead man can go with the current, but it requires a living one to go against it. To have religion when it is fashionable is easy enough; but to have it and show it when it is everywhere spoken against, demands courage.

THE WITNESS IN OURSELVES.

"He that believeth," says St. John, "hath the witness in himself," that is, the witness that he does believe, and that by believing he is saved. This witness consists of the united testimony of the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, and from this arises the blessed assurance that we are the children of God.

"Should it still be inquired," asks Wesley, "How does the Spirit of God *bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God*, so as to exclude all doubt, and evidence the reality of our sonship? The answer is clear :— And first, as to the witness of our spirit. The soul as intimately and evidently perceives when it loves, delights, and rejoices in God, as when it loves and delights in anything on earth. And it can no more doubt whether it loves, delights, and rejoices, or not, than whether it exists or not. If therefore this be just reasoning—

"He that now loves God, that delights and rejoices in Him, with an humble joy, an holy delight, and an obedient love, is a child of God :

"But I thus love, delight, and rejoice in God ;

"Therefore I am a child of God.

"Then a Christian can in nowise doubt of his being a child of God. Of the former proposition, he has as full an assurance as he has that the Scriptures are of God. And of his thus loving God, he has an inward proof, which is nothing short of self-evidence. Thus 'the testimony of our own spirit,' is with the most intimate conviction manifested to our hearts, in such a manner as, beyond all reasonable doubt, to evince the reality of our sonship."

FEARFUL STATE OF THE BACKSLIDER.

The language employed by the Holy Spirit to set forth the state of the backslider is truly appalling.

His state is represented as *worse than it was before his conversion* :—"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (2 Pet. ii, 20). "Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there ; and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matt. xii, 45).

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned" (Heb. vi, 4—8).

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. x, 26, 27).

"For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Pet. ii, 21).

This fearful delineation of the real state of the backslider ought to arouse us to vigilance and prayer that we may never make shipwreck of faith.

"Lest this my fearful case should be,
Each moment knit my soul to Thee;
And lead me to the mount above,
Through the low vale of humble love."

STEADFASTNESS.

Having begun in the Spirit you must not end in the flesh. The choice which you have made of religion, you must be prepared to stand by, under all circumstances, and at all risks. Better lose all things than lose that which is *better* than all things. You will have constant influences acting against you to draw you back into the ways of sin, which you have for-

saken. Resist them all with courage and promptness. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. xvi, 13). "Henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried away with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. iv, 14). "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. xv, 58). "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Pet. iii, 17).

SPEAKING EVIL OF THE ABSENT.

Philip Henry used to remind those who spoke evil of people behind their backs, of that law,—“Thou shalt not curse the deaf.” Those that are absent are deaf, they cannot hear what is said of them, and correct it, and therefore we should say no ill of them. A friend of his, inquiring of him concerning a matter which tended to reflect upon some people, he began to give him an account of the story, but immediately broke off, and checked himself with these words, “But our rule is, to speak evil of no man,” and would proceed no farther in the story. The week before he died, a person requested the loan of a particular book from him. “Truly,” said he, “I would lend it to you, but that it rakes in the faults of some, which should rather be covered with a mantle of love.”

DIFFERENCE IN TEMPTATION.

Satan is like the angler, he suits his bait to the fish which he wants to catch. Like Agrippina who destroyed her husband Claudius, by mixing poison with the food in which he most delighted, Satan seeks to ruin us by the things for which we have the strongest relish. First of all he searches to find out our tempers, thoughts, inclinations, affections; and which way these lean in their tendency: he then suits his temptations to them. He mixes the poison in the dainty dish of which, he

thinks, we are sure to partake. Is the heart set on riches, he will fix a Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold before it, to covet, to fall down and worship. It was the love of the bag in Judas, that led him to betray his Master with a kiss, and sell Him for thirty pieces of silver. Are there any unclean feelings lingering in the soul, Satan will fan them with his gentle breath, and bring influences and things to work, with a view to excite them into an irresistible passion; as in the cases of David and Jonadab. He will tempt the vain man with flattery, the ambitious man with a crown, the weak man with beauty, the ease-loving man with indolence, the covetous man with a wedge of gold.

How are we to meet Satan in these varying temptations? A chief way of resisting him, is to seek more grace from God, by which to subdue and conquer the predisposition within us for the things with which he tempts us. Let us be vigilant against him, but mainly employed in bringing every thought, temper, affection, and inclination into full obedience to Christ. When we have attained this, his temptations will have little power. There is no temptation in gold, to a man who has lost covetous desires; no temptation in beauty, to a man who has crucified the flesh with the lusts thereof; no temptation in flattery, to a man who seeks the praise that comes from God only.

It is thus, we shall be able to overcome the devil and his temptations, BY OVERCOMING OURSELVES AND WATCHING AND PRAYING AGAINST HIS ASSAULTS.

BUSINESS AND RELIGION.

An American Christian merchant in speaking of the claims of business and religion, gave his experience in the following language:—"I have my business to care for by my personal attention every day; if absent one or more days something will go wrong, and I suffer. So, as to my religious life; I must go to church, to the society and prayer-meeting regularly, and though sometimes I do not feel well, I dare not frame excuses to stay away. Staying away once, the temptation

becomes strong to stay away a second time, and then a declension begins; and when a religious declension sets in, it is like the setting in of a chilling winter rain—no one can tell when it will end nor what mischief it will work.”

These are the words of religious wisdom, that every Christian man in business should ponder. Can he not see that religion will no more prosper without a personal attention to the means, than his business will? Why is the maxim laid down in the Bible, if not practicable:—“Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord?” If these two modes of life cannot meet in the one person, without being antagonistic, how is it that God has given the injunction? Can some Christian men carry out the precept in beautiful, harmonious, profitable action? then why not *all*? Alas, how many are there who, while satisfied that business requires prompt, regular, and personal attention, live in relation to religion as though *that* could prosper without fervency of spirit or serving the Lord! Will nature show its life, beauties, and fruitfulness in the absence of the sun, air, dews, and rains? Will trade and commerce thrive either under the company's control or in the nation in general, apart from thought, diligence, punctuality, perseverance? No more will religion in the person or in the church, without an appropriate use of suitable means. To think otherwise implies a state of mind antinomian or fanatical, in its character.

CALMNESS.

Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,
While these hot breezes blow;
Be like the night dew's cooling balm
Upon earth's fevered brow.

Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,
Soft resting on Thy breast;
Soothe me with holy hymn and psalm,
And bid my spirit rest.

Calm me, my God, and keep me calm ;
Let Thine outstretched wing,
Be like the shade of Elim's palm
Beside her desert spring.

Yes ; keep me calm, though loud and rude
The sounds my ear that greet ;
Calm in the closet's solitude,
Calm in the bustling street ;

Calm in the hour of buoyant health ;
Calm in my hour of pain ;
Calm in my poverty or wealth,
Calm in my loss or gain :

Calm in the sufferance of wrong,
Like Him who bore my shame ;
Calm 'mid the threatening, taunting throng,
Who hate Thy holy Name ;

Calm when the great world's news with power
My listening spirit stir :
Let not the tidings of the hour
E'er find too fond an ear ;

Calm as the ray of sun or star
Which storms assail in vain,
Moving unruffled through earth's war
The *eternal* calm to gain !

Horatius Bonar.

CHAPTER XXVI.

(Twenty-sixth Meeting.)

SEEING GOD IN ALL THINGS.

To eye God in all our comforts, and observe the smiling aspects of His face when He dispenses them to us ; to eye Him in all our afflictions, and consider the paternal wisdom that instructs us in them ; how would this increase our mercies and mitigate our troubles !

To eye Him in all His creatures, and observe the various prints of the Creator's glory stamped upon them ; with how lively a lustre would it clothe the world, and make everything look with a pleasant face ! What a heaven were it to look upon God as filling all in all ; and how sweetly would it ere-while raise our souls into some such sweet seraphic strains, "holy, holy : the whole earth is full of His glory."

To eye Him in His providences, and consider how all events are with infinite wisdom disposed into an apt subserviency to His holy will and ends ; what difficulties would hence be solved, what seeming inconsistencies reconciled ! And how much would it contribute to the ease and quiet of our minds !

To eye Him in His Christ, the express image of His person, the brightness of His glory ; and in the Christian economy, the Gospel revelation and ordinances, through which He manifests Himself.

To behold Him in the posture in which He saves souls, "clad with the garments of salvation," girt with power and apparelled with love, "travelling in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save."

To view Him addressing Himself to allure and win to Him the hearts of sinners, when He discovers Himself in Christ, upon that reconciling design, makes "grace that brings salvation appear," &c.

To behold Him entering into human flesh, pitching His tabernacle among men, hanging out His ensigns of peace, laying His trains, spreading His net, "the cords of a man, the bands of love."

To see Him in His Christ ascending the cross, lifted up to draw all men to Him, and consider that mighty love of justice and of souls, both so eminently conspicuous in that stupendous sacrifice; here to fix our eyes looking to Jesus, and beholding Him whom we have pierced.

To see His power and glory, as they were wont to be seen in His sanctuaries; to observe Him in the solemnities of His worship, and the graceful postures wherein He holds communion with His saints when He seats Himself amidst them on the throne of grace, receives their addresses, dispenses the tokens and pledges of His love; into what transports might these visions put us every day!—*Howe*.

RELIEFS IN THE SORROWS OF LIFE.

When sorrows come upon you as the floods of many waters, and would drown all the joy of your spirits, endeavour to call before your mind the following thoughts:

1. That the mercies you have received in life have been far greater and far more numerous than your crosses.

2. That, as Christians, you have, in the grace of God, sources of abundant consolation, of which you should avail yourselves.

3. That your sorrows indulged will embitter all the comforts which you have.

4. That your heavenly Father often takes away some enjoyed blessings to make way for the communication of still larger.

5. That if you mourn over the loss of any creature good, the possession of it longer might have been the occasion of greater sorrow than the present loss.

6. That all the troubles of life are "but for a moment."

7. That excessive sorrows do not lessen the trials we bear, but rather add to them.

8. That others equally good or better than we, have suffered more than we.

9. That all the things of this life are so directed by God as to work together for our good.

10. That the grace of God is sufficient to help us, if we seek it at His hands.

11. That our blessed Saviour has passed through all our sorrows before us, and He sympathises with us, and ever lives to make intercession for us.

12. That after the sorrows of life are ended, you will enter into the JOY OF YOUR LORD.

CHRIST IN RELIGION.

In all saving religion Jesus Christ occupies a place in the beginning, in the continuance, and in the end of it. He is its Origin, its Sustainer, and its Consummator. It is in Him we believe for pardon. It is through Him we are reconciled unto God. It is His Spirit that assures us of our heirship with the Father,—that regenerates, sanctifies, guides, strengthens, and perfects us according to the Gospel law. It is His grace which preserves us from sin, and helps us in every time of need. It is in Him that the promises are “yea and amen.” Is there light in our religion? He gives it as the Sun of Righteousness. Is there peace? He is that peace. Is there joy? He is the subject of it. Is there hope? He is that hope. Is there life? He is “our life.” Is there holiness? It comes by His blood. Is there prayer? He is the only Mediator by whom it is presented. In one word there is nothing in religion that is *saving* but what He is its source, its life, its all and in all.

It is just in proportion as we receive Christ and live in Him that we realise in our experience, and manifest in our lives, the saving nature of religion. When self, the world, friends, rituals, ceremonies, are subordinate, and Christ is supreme in our thoughts, affections, prayers, labours, everything, then we possess the religion which is of Him, and which saves us to the uttermost.

This is the religion that equips us for the battles of life, and gives us unceasing triumphs. This is the "godliness" that is "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." This is the "one thing needful," that "good part," which shall never be taken away from us. This is the "kingdom of God," which must be sought first, and to which, as subsequent good, all other things shall be added. This is the "strength" with which we can do all things (Phil. iv, 13). This is the "rod and staff" which will comfort us in the valley of the shadow of death, and the key that will open the "everlasting doors," to give us entrance into the joy of our Lord.

COMFORT OF ASSURANCE.

"This," says Thomas Watson, "is the manna in the golden pot; the white stone, the wine of paradise which cheers the heart. How comfortable is God's smile! The sun is more refreshing when it shines out than when it shines in a cloud; it is a prelibation and a foretaste of glory, it puts a man in heaven before his time; none can know how delicious and ravishing it is, but such as feel it; as none can know how sweet honey is but those who have tasted it."

Watts most beautifully describes the comfort of assurance in the following lines :

Lord, how secure and blest are they
Who feel the joy of pardoned sin;
Should storms of wrath shake earth and sea,
Their minds have heaven and peace within.

The day glides sweetly o'er their heads
Made up of innocence and love;
And soft and silent as the shades,
Their nightly minutes gently move.

Quick as their thoughts, their joys come on,
But fly not half so swift away :

Their souls are ever bright as noon,
 And calm as summer evenings be.
 How oft they look to the heavenly hills,
 Where groves of living pleasure grow ;
 And longing hope and cheerful smiles,
 Sit undisturb'd upon their brow.
 They scorn to seek earth's golden toys,
 But spend the day and share the night,
 In numbering o'er the richer joys
 That heaven prepares for their delight.

FAITH AND SALVATION.

Faith and salvation are as inseparable as Christ and salvation. As there would never have been any salvation purchased without Christ, so there can be no salvation enjoyed without faith. Anything, everything else, possessed, cannot be a substitute for this; just as every sacrifice of the Jews, every angel in heaven, every creature on earth, could not have taken the place of Christ. "He that BELIEVETH SHALL BE SAVED; and he that believeth NOT SHALL BE DAMNED." Oh! the weakness, the shiftlessness, of human nature, in trying to find salvation in any other way than this God-fixed way!

THE FAVOUR OF GOD.

If we know what it is to have the favour of parents, of masters, of friends, of those that are in authority over us, we may infer in some degree, what it is to have the favour of God. Can we have a greater boon on earth than this? Oh! how the soul drinks in the smiling rays which come from the light of His countenance! How it basks and revels here, as in a banquet of the heavenly mansion! "In His favour is life," said one, who knew from experience (Ps. xxx, 5).

This is a blessing, which we, as the people of God, ought to enjoy:—"A good man obtaineth favour of the Lord" (Prov. xii, 2).

The favour of God is the *defence* of His people:—"For Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield" (Ps. v, 12).

The favour of God is the *stability* of His people:—"Lord by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong" (Ps. xxx, 7).

The favour of God is the *victory* of His people:—"For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them" (Ps. xlv, 3).

If such are some of the privileges of the favour of God, let us rejoice in it. Let us pray for its continuance. Let us guard against everything contrary to it. Let us anticipate the full, unclouded, changeless, and eternal favour of God in heaven.

SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

Mr. Wesley, in the year 1764, took a review of all his previous teachings upon this doctrine, and gave the summary in the following terms:

1. There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture.
2. It is not so early as justification; for justified persons are to "go on unto perfection" (Heb. vi, 1).
3. It is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect (Phil. iii, 15).
4. It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone.
5. It does not make a man infallible: none is infallible while he remains in the body.
6. Is it sinless? It is not worth while to contend for a term. It is "salvation from sin."
7. It is "perfect love" (1 John, iv, 18). This is the essence of it: its properties, or inseparable fruits, are rejoicing ever-

more, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks (1 Thess. v, 16, &c.).

8. It is improvable. It is so far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase, that one perfected in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before.

9. It is capable of being lost ; of which we have numerous instances. But we were not thoroughly convinced of this till five or six years ago.

10. It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work.

11. But is it instantaneous or not ? In examining this, let us go on step by step.

An instantaneous change has been wrought in some believers : none can deny this.

Since that change, they enjoy perfect love ; they feel this, and this alone ; they "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks." Now, this is all I mean by perfection ; therefore, these are witnesses of the perfection I preach.

But in some this change was not instantaneous. They did not perceive the instant when it was wrought. It is often difficult to perceive the instant when a man dies ; yet there is an instant in which life ceases. And when ever sin ceases, there must be a last moment of its existence, and a first moment of our deliverance from it.

CHASTENING IN LOVE.

Do not think that because the Lord is chastening you with some visitation of His providence, therefore you are not His child, and He does not love you. This is one of the ways, however strange it may seem, in which He evinces His love and your sonship. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. xii, 6). "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. iii, 19). "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law" (Ps. xciv, 12).

The Rev. John Newton, hearing that a person in whose welfare he was greatly interested, had met with peculiar success in his business, and was deeply immersed in worldly engagements, the first time he called on him, he took him by the hand, and drawing him on one side, into the counting-house, told his apprehension of his spiritual welfare. His friend, without making any reply, called down his wife, who came with her eyes suffused in tears, and unable to speak. Inquiring the cause, he was told, she had just been sent for to one of her children, that was out at nurse, and supposed to be in dying circumstances. Claspng her hands immediately in his, Mr. Newton said, "God be thanked, He has not forsaken you! I do not wish your babe to suffer, but I am happy to find He gives you this token of His favour."

NO FRUIT TO PERFECTION.

If the plants of worldliness are allowed to grow in the heart, how can we expect the tree of holiness to flourish? These draw upon that, and either cause it to wither and die, or keep it in a sickly, stunted condition. There is no nutriment left to sustain it. Hence it is that our Saviour tells us of those who are choked with the riches, and cares, and pleasures of this life, "AND BRING NO FRUIT TO PERFECTION."

PERSECUTIONS.

Count it no strange thing that you should be persecuted for living a holy Christian life. They that are in the flesh have always persecuted them who are in the Spirit. Think of the primitive followers of the Lamb; think of the blessed apostles; think of the faithful martyrs; think of the early Methodists; and you will see how the world has ever been true to its nature in persecuting the good and the holy. Especially call to mind the Great Master Himself, even Jesus, the spotless One. As He excelled in holiness, so He excelled in persecutions. He

was despised and rejected of men. His life was sought by Herod. He was hated by the world which He came to save. His own people despised Him. He was called "Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." He was driven from place to place. He was envied, reproached, and impoverished. One of His disciples denied Him, another betrayed Him, and all forsook Him. He was falsely accused; he was spat upon and scourged. A murderer was preferred before Him. He was condemned to a cruel death, with two thieves. He was reviled in the agonies of dying. Gall and vinegar were given Him to drink; and He expired amid the execrations of the excited multitudes. Surely if the Master was thus persecuted, there is nothing strange that the servant should be.

Rather than be discouraged, lift up your head in gladness. You are highly privileged to be a follower of such a noble army of sufferers for righteousness' sake, headed by the glorious Prince of holiness and angels. To suffer persecution for the religion of the Saviour, entitles you to a blessedness which all the good-will, and all the patronage, and all the wealth of the world could never bestow :—"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, FOR GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN." The apostles rejoiced that they were "counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." Oh, what an honour and happiness Jesus gives to us when we endure persecutions for Him! Every stone cast at Stephen turned to a gem in his crown; so every degree of suffering you have for Him, shall add to your weight of glory in heaven.

SATISFACTION IN JESUS.

How tedious and tasteless the hours,
When Jesus no longer I see;
Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers,
Have all lost their sweetness to me.

The midsummer sun shines but dim,
The fields strive in vain to look gay ;
But when I am happy in Him,
December's as pleasant as May.

His name yields the richest perfume,
And sweeter than music His voice ;
His presence disperses my gloom,
And makes all within me rejoice.
I should, were He always so nigh,
Have nothing to wish or to fear ;
No mortal so happy as I,—
My summer would last all the year.

Content with beholding His face,
My all to His pleasure resigned ;
No changes of season or place
Would make any change in my mind :
While bless'd with a sense of His love,
A palace a toy would appear ;
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there.

Dear Lord, if indeed I am thine,
If Thou art my sun and my song ;
Say, why do I languish and pine ?
And why are my winters so long ?
O drive these dark clouds from the sky,
Thy soul-cheering presence restore ;
Or take me to Thee up on high,
Where winter and clouds are no more.

John Newton.

CHAPTER XXVII.

(Twenty-seventh Meeting.)

A LITTLE LOVE TO GOD.

YOU must thank God for even a little love to Him. There are thousands who are cursed with the want of a little. If it is only a drop, that may increase to a glorious fullness. If only the first degree, it may go on unto perfection. The love of God is not like the laws of the Medes and Persians. It is capable of increase or diminution. You must not be satisfied with a little, any more than you are with a little light streaming through the crevices of the shutters of the window of your room. You must throw wide open the means of Divine love, and let the full tide flow in. We sometimes sing, "Speak to our heart, and let us feel the kindling of Thy love." This is quite right so far as it goes; but who is satisfied with nothing but the *kindling* of a fire? That has not much substance to warm the house, or to continue in burning long. No, my brother, you must not be content with the *kindling* of Divine love. Rejoice that you have that; and now that it is on fire, let the flame communicate to every desire, motive, affection, power of your soul; to every word and action of your life, and you shall become like an angel beautiful with love, and like a seraph inflamed with it; so that you shall meet the Saviour's command to love God with *all* the heart, *all* the mind, *all* the soul, and *all* the strength; and realise in your experience the full force of the apostle's description of love in 1 Cor. xiii.

If you are satisfied with a little love, then you will be satisfied with little obedience, little self-denial, little hope, little zeal, little beneficence, little attention to the ordinances and means of the church; and so you will be a *little Christian*. The effort to keep your Christianity will be much more than

if your love was made perfect. The Christian with the most love finds it the easiest to retain, to exemplify, and to increase his religion.

THE EFFECTS OF A TRUE FAITH.

If we are partakers of a true faith it will evidence itself to others as much as a true life will. A *dead* faith is of no more use in the Christian life than a dead body in the social life. A delicate, weak, spasmodic faith has similar effects upon the soul and its duties in religion, that the same kind of life has upon the body and the duties of our calling. A healthy, vigorous life in the body, works and does something; it eats and drinks the good things of a kind providence; it enjoys the use of various powers and privileges: so does a true faith work in all duties obligatory in the sphere of its life; it participates in the gracious provisions of redemption, and hereby perpetuates and strengthens its life. "So far as we have any true faith, we *must* live—we cannot help living—with a view to eternity. Faith keeps God ever before us, and so makes us think of pleasing God more than of pleasing man. Faith keeps Christ ever before us, and so makes us think of copying His example rather than of living after our own foolish devices. Faith keeps heaven before us, and so makes us long to reach heaven. With the prize ever in view, how can we help pressing toward the mark 'for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?' And so we see how faith produces works, and how a true and lively faith is as evidently known by good works as a tree is discerned by the fruit. If a man is not living to God, there can be no *faith* in God. He may *believe* that there is a God, but there is no vivid constant sense of God's presence or of God's truth. If a man is not seeking to get to heaven, there can be no *faith* in heaven. He may never doubt that there is such a place as heaven, but it is no living abiding reality in his heart."

IN CONFLICT.

Are you contending with your enemies? then fight cheerfully and courageously, as if you were assured of victory. Turn away your mind from what you suffer and look to the reward which awaits you. One great cause of the fall of some is that they look to the present pain more than the future recompense, at their enemies more than their Lord; like Peter, who feared the raging wind and boisterous waters more than he confided in his Master, and therefore began to sink; like some of the martyrs who, in view of the sufferings of the flames, or the tortures of the inquisition, recanted, became apostates, and died miserable deaths. Let it be your conduct in the day of tribulation, to look to Jesus for help and to heaven for reward. Imitate your Saviour, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross and despised the shame. Rejoice in tribulation, because it is for Jesus' sake. Be glad that it is your high privilege to endure reproach for Him. If you suffer with Him you shall reign with Him. The victory is sure to be on your side. Jesus will break the bow and the spear of your foes. He will bring their counsels to nought. He will tread them under His feet, and bring you forth in the honour and strength of conquest. You shall gain experience and assurance by the war. You shall be more prepared for other conflicts; and coming out of the *last*, an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

LIFE IN CHRIST.

We have no spiritual life within us, but what comes from Christ and is supported by Him. Until He spake and breathed into us by His spirit, we were as dead in trespasses and sins as was Lazarus in the grave, or the widow's son on the bier. But when He by the Spirit, through the word, called upon us to "come forth," we started into life, as they, and became *living*

souls, among those that are "alive to God." And now our life in Christ in the spiritual world is as much a fact as their life in the body was a fact in the physical world. Had not Jesus raised *them* from the dead they would have remained dead until the morning of the resurrection; so, if He had not infused life from Himself into our souls, they would never have been enlivened by any other power. We can now understand the experience of St. Paul: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii, 20). We can also see the appropriateness of St. Paul's address to the Ephesians: "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii, 1, 5, 6).

NATURE OF SUBJECTION TO GOD.

"This," says John Howe, "is the soul's real and practical acknowledgment of the Supreme Majesty, its homage to its Maker, its self-dedication, than which nothing more suits the state of a creature, or the spirit of a saint. It is that by which the blessed soul becomes, in its own sense, a consecrated thing, a devoted thing, sacred to God; its very life and whole being referred and made over to Him."

AIMING AT PERFECTION.

God's people often find that in aiming at perfection they come far short of their aim. They see, after all their tears, prayers, faith, and sacrifice, they are very much wanting in the perfection which they desire. This is the case in regard to everything in this world. The child at school may aim at perfection in his writing, summing and drawing; but he fails to reach it. The workman in his shop has the same aim, but attains the same results; so of the author, and all, who are en-

gaged in any work, and at the same time progressive in their spirit. But no one gives up aiming at perfection because he cannot attain it. Neither should you, my brother. Though after all your efforts for years, there may be blotches and scratches, and other marks of imperfection in your Christian work and character, yet you must keep your aim before you, press towards it, and indulge the lively hope that the more you labour, the sooner you will reach the point before you. There is this thought to relieve you, in all your discouragements from a view of your failings, viz., Jesus Christ makes up all deficiencies, after you have done your duty. He it is that gives the finishing touch to all your efforts to form a perfect character. It is His blood that cleanseth you from *all* sin. It is in Him that you are *perfect*. It is in Him that the glorious Father sees you without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Let this, then, be your endeavour,—Pray, believe, meditate, resist all sin, search the Scriptures; as though you meant to attain perfection in them, at the same time looking to Jesus for that perfection which alone can recommend you to God and qualify you for heaven—a perfection in which He will see His own nature and image, and reward it with a share in His own glory.

FEAR OF FALLING.

There is a danger lest this fear should lead us to fall. If we indulge it to such an extent as to produce spiritual nervousness and trepidation, it will be with us as with an individual walking on ice or slippery places, the very fear lest he should fall occasions the actual thing which he fears. If we indulge a fear of falling at all, it should be a fear which leads us to cry unto God for help, which creates within us a firmer faith in the promises, and stimulates us to a more diligent use of the means of grace. If our fear has this effect upon us, it will be beneficial instead of injurious. This is the fear of falling, and only this, in which we should at all indulge. In the former sense, we have no right to fear if we are the

children of God and followers of the Lamb. To fear in that way is to sin, and to have torment. It reflects upon the fidelity of God, the efficiency of His grace, the prevalency of Christ's intercession, the truthfulness of the promises, the courage of our hearts, the strength of our faith. It gives Satan the advantage over us, and causes the world to remark upon the weakness and insufficiency of religion. I know a child may sometimes fear when walking in the dark with his father, through a lonely wood, but his very fear draws out his confidence in his father, and hence he clings to him all the more; and the fear of being left, or falling into danger does not enter his mind while father is with him. The soldier may sometimes fear in the heat of the conflict; but his fear does not make him a coward, but increases his valour. A business man may sometimes fear that his accounts are not right; but this fear does not lead him to destroy his books or give up his business, but furnishes him with reasons for the examination of his accounts, and for greater diligence in his business. Our fear, as Christians, may be a fear of this kind, and yield to us a great gain.

A SMALL TEMPTATION.

Satan is a wily foe. He comes to us in all the variety of ways which his subtilty and malice can suggest as being likely to succeed in accomplishing our ruin. If the *great* temptation to sin makes us shudder and instantly resist, he has another method, that of the *small* temptation. "Is it not a little one," he whispers in our ears, "and can you not yield to this without injury to your religion?" If this prevails, then he comes again with the same, or one a degree in advance, until he involves us in the very sin, or even greater than that which the first temptation to commit made us shudder and instantly resist. If we listen to the small temptation, we shall find the truth of the saying of the son of Sirach, "He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little." The sting of the small viper may bring death. The small spark from the candle may set fire to a mansion. The small crack in the lute

spoils its music ; and the small opening in the reservoir makes way for the rush of waters which carry devastation and death before them.

Our course with the small temptation must be the same as with the great. We must cast the viper from us, or avoid it altogether. We must crush the cockatrice in the egg : avoid the fire by quenching the spark ; prevent the deluge of waters by keeping the embankment sound. Let us act with Satan in his temptations, be they small or great, as we would with those of his agents, who in large cities lie in wait to deceive and lead astray the simple ones,—*give them no ear, no response, pass on our way in duty.* “RESIST THE DEVIL AND HE WILL FLEE FROM YOU.”

PROVIDENCE.

“We are apt to believe in Providence,” says Beecher, “as we have our own way ; but if things go awry, then we think, if there is a God He is in heaven, and not on earth.

“The cricket in the spring builds his little house in the meadow, and chirps for joy because all is going so well with him. But when he hears the sound of the plough a few furrows off, and the thunder of the oxen's tread, then the skies begin to look dark, and his heart fails him. The plough comes crunching along, and turns his dwelling bottom side up, and as he goes rolling over and over without a home, he says, ‘O, the foundations of the world are destroyed, and everything is going to ruin!’ But the husbandman who walks behind the plough, singing and whistling as he goes, does he think the foundations of the world are breaking up? Why, he does not so much as know there was any house or cricket there. He thinks of the harvest which is to follow the track of the plough ; and the cricket too, if he will but wait, will find a thousand blades of grass where there was but one before.

“We are like the crickets. If any thing happens to overthrow *our* plans, we think all is going wrong.”

RESIGNATION IN SICKNESS.

The Rev. Joseph Alleine, the author of "Alarm to Unconverted Sinners," was once the subject of a severe and protracted illness. One of his friends asked him how he could be contented to be so long under such weakness as he then suffered? He answered, "What! is God my Father; Jesus Christ my Saviour; and the Spirit my sweet friend, my comforter, and sanctifier; and heaven my inheritance; and shall I not be content without limbs and health? Through grace I am fully satisfied with my Father's pleasure." To another who proposed a similar question, he said, "I have chosen God, and He is become mine, and I know with whom I have trusted myself, which is enough. He is an unreasonable wretch that cannot be content with God though he had nothing else. My interest in God is all my joy."

THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

Moses addressed God thus, "If Thy presence go not with us, take us not up hence." He preferred, it seems, to remain with the people in the wilderness, than to go up into Canaan without God. The wilderness, with God, was more desirable than Canaan without Him. The preference of Moses is the preference of every one of God's people. The future part of the Christian journey, and heaven at the end, without God's presence, is a prospect from which every good man's heart naturally shrinks. He falls back from the journey and wishes not to go into the promised inheritance. Its honey would be bitter; its milk sour; its hills desolate; its inhabitants unconquerable. The wilderness, with its manna, its quails, its tents, its serpents, its surrounding enemies, its threescore years and ten life, would be much better than that. But the Almighty said unto Moses, "My presence *shall* go with thee, and I will give thee rest." This was enough for the man of God. With this assurance he feared no danger,

he trembled at no enemy, he shrunk from no responsibility. It is true the wilderness was still a wilderness, even with the Divine presence; but it was cheered with the blessings of Heaven; the journey in all its stages was lighted up with cheerful hopes; and the Canaan at the end was the fairest, loveliest, and most desirable country under the whole heavens. My brother, as the Lord said to Moses, so He says to you. Here you are in the wilderness, with the future untravelled portion of your journey before you, and heaven at the end. Fear not, neither be dismayed. Think not to make your stay here. He tells you He will go with you, and give you rest. Go forward, then, in your way. The pillar of fire shall be with you by night and cloud of glory by day. Beneath the shadow of His wing shall you *rest*. His truth and shield shall be your buckler. Thus you shall have rest on your journey; but when the river is crossed, and the gates are entered, and the inheritance is possessed, then, indeed, will the presence of the Lord be your rest. You shall rest in His love, in His smiles, in His nature, in His kingdom and glory for ever and ever!

WHAT THEN ?

After the Christian's tears,
 After his fights and fears,
 After his weary cross,
 "All things below but loss"—
 What then ?

Oh! then a holy calm,
 Resting on JESUS' arm,
 Oh! then a deeper love
 For the pure Home above.

After this holy calm,
 This rest on JESUS' arm,
 After this deepen'd love
 For the pure Home above—
 What then ?

Oh! then work for Him,
 Perishing souls to win,
 Then JESUS' presence near,
 Death's darkest hour to cheer.

And when the work is done,
 When the last soul is won,
 When JESUS' love and power
 Have cheered the dying hour—
 What then?

Oh! then the Crown is given!
 Oh! then the rest in Heaven!
 Endless life in endless day,
 Sin and sorrow pass'd away.

E. J.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

(Twenty-eighth Meeting.)

CONFESSING CHRIST BEFORE THE WORLD.

"YE are my witnesses," says Jesus to His disciples. If the disciples at first had not borne witness of Him, who would have done it? To whom could He have looked for testimony to His character and works, if not to them who had been with Him, and knew more of Him than any other? The Scribe, the Sadducee and Pharisee, sought to extinguish His name and works, or to exhibit them only as associated with an impostor. It is even so now. What does the world care for Christ? Infidelity, in its various forms, bears no testimony to Him. Many who profess His name are either deaf concerning Him, or if they speak, it is to give a mutilated or a false testimony, which injures Him more than it honours Him. It is only you who have believed in Him and love Him, and from your belief and love have arrived at a correct knowledge

of Him, that can witness of Him before the world. What you have seen and felt, of that you can testify; as did the apostles and primitive Christians; as any faithful witness who is called upon in court of justice. You have seen Jesus by faith; you have heard Him inly speak by His Spirit; you have felt the flow of Divine love from Him within your soul. You live *in* Him, and have fellowship *with* Him. You dwell in the light in which He dwells, and see Him by His own glory. All you are as a Christian He has made you, and all that you have as a Christian, He has bestowed upon you. As you are thus His disciple, He looks to you to confess Him. To whom else should He look? Let your confession be clear, unwavering, consistent, experimental, scriptural, un-failing. Confess Him in the spirit of your temper, and in the actions of your life. Confess Him thus in the street, in the family, in the church, in the shop, in the market. Confess Him in honour or dishonour, in wealth or poverty, before the few or the multitude. Never, no, never, be ashamed to confess your Lord! He will, then, confess you before His Father and His holy angels.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE DEJECTED CHRISTIAN.

"Not for ever has the hand of love been withdrawn; not for ever has the voice of mercy been hushed in silence; not for ever has the fountain of heavenly blessing and joy been sealed up; not for ever has the sunshine departed, and the misty shadows gathered round thee. "Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage." He will strengthen thine heart. Yes, He will "lift upon thee the light of His countenance," and whisper words of consolation and endearment. He will take thee by the hand, and guide thee over the slippery places. He will refresh thy soul with heavenly manner and living water. He will reveal to thee more than thou hast ever yet known of the beauties of holiness—the attractiveness of spiritual communion and intercourse—the joy of living in sensible fellowship, and in childlike simplicity and trustfulness, with thy God and

Redeemer. And at length, when the end of the journey has been reached, when thy soul is sweetened for a more glorious land, He will send His messenger of love. "Rise up, my child, my faithful one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone," the clouds are fast receding from the sky, the shadows depart of thy mortal life, and the bright effulgent day is dawning that shall never fade. It is past, it is gone—the dark time of thy conflict and trial—the dreary season of sickness, and trouble, and disquietude—the time of the singing of angels is come for thee, and the voice of the seraphim is heard in that land. Thou hast wrestled with sin till the breaking of the day; thou hast toiled all night, but the morning is nigh. "Arise up then my child, my faithful one, and come away, let us haste and be gone, for the dawn is bright on the everlasting hills."

NOT NOW AS AT FIRST.

In some respects you should not be now as you were at first. You ought now to be nearer heaven, more humble, believing, zealous, holy, useful, and happy. But perhaps you think that in these respects you are not what you were at first. There may be a mistake here. If you have been endeavouring to maintain fidelity to Christ in your heart and life, you must necessarily be in a better spiritual condition now than you were at first. You may not have the same rapturous joy and ecstatic hope; the same buoyant confidence and impetuous emotions. These things, though not existing within you in the same feelings and manifestations, may nevertheless be within you in another degree. If you have not the joys of the newly wedded pair, you have the joys of those who have spent many days of sorrow, toil, intercourse, and mutual confidence together. If your hope is not the hope of the lively and active youth, full of fire and sanguineness, it is the settled regular hope of the man who is daily realizing hopes and hastening on towards the fruition of the last hope. If your zeal is not so enthusiastic and intense in its action, it

may appear so from the fact that you have more knowledge and prudence associated with it. If you are not the active *youth* you once were, yet you are the same person, having past from the inexperience and sheer emotions of the one into the stability, equanimity, and wisdom of a *man* in Christ. If in these respects it is not with you now as in the past, then the change is a matter of thanks. Give all diligence that the difference may become greater every day. If the difference does not consist in these things, then it becomes a subject of grave inquiry whether you have not lost your first love, and cast away the beginning of your confidence.

FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

"There are many Christians," says Samuel Rutherford, "like young sailors, who think the shore and the whole land do move when the ship and they themselves are moved; just so not a few imagine that God moveth, and faileth, and changeth places, because their godly souls are subject to alteration; but the foundation of the Lord abideth sure."

Faithful, O Lord, Thy mercies are,
A rock which cannot move;
A thousand promises declare
Thy constancy of love.

"He is faithful who has promised." "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My word shall not pass away." "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever."

Did ever any patriarch, prophet, apostle, or angel, declare Him to be unfaithful? Did any devil ever do so? Did any Christian? What say the sun, moon, and stars? Do not they pronounce Him to be faithful to laws under which He placed them from the first moment of their revolution? There is not an individual thing, or a particle of a thing on earth,

that speaks to the contrary. You may trust the Lord Jehovah in His faithfulness; for sooner shall His power fail, His love decline, His holiness diminish, His truth warp, His knowledge decrease, than His faithfulness. As unchangeable, almighty, infinite, and eternal, as are His other perfections, so is His faithfulness. We have more need to be concerned about *our* faithfulness failing to Him, than His to us, Alas! the possibilities of our falling away from our promises and engagements to Him are infinitely greater than His. Let us learn then to live with an unwavering reliance upon Him, and a jealous inspection of ourselves. We may justly watch our faithfulness with concern; but on His we may repose with the calmness and confidence of infancy in the mother's nursing arms.

THE GOD OF COMFORT.

"All consolation," says Job Caryl, "belongs to God. He has all comfort in His own power and disposal. There is not a creature in the world can give out the least drain of comfort to us without the commission of God. It is possible for one man to give another riches, but he cannot give him comfort. The consolation of all our possessions and relations is from God. Whosoever would have comfort must trade to heaven for it; that is a commodity can be found on no earthly coast: you may fetch in wealth from many coasts of the earth, but cannot fetch in comfort till you address yourself to the God of heaven. We can procure our own sorrows quickly, but God only makes us to rejoice: our relief from outward affliction is the gift of God. He only can comfort us in outward afflictions who can command the creature; and he only can comfort us against our inward griefs who can convince the conscience. None can do either of these but God. The Hebrew word comfort used in divers places in the Old Testament is to speak to the heart. Now, God only can speak to the heart: man can speak to the ear; he can speak words, but he can go no

further; therefore the act and art of comforting belong properly to God."

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the GOD OF ALL COMFORT, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. i, 3, 4).

"GOD THAT COMFORTETH THOSE THAT ARE CAST DOWN" (2 Cor. vii, 6).

"I, EVEN I, AM HE THAT COMFORTETH YOU" (Isa. li, 12).

PRAYERS NOT LOST.

"The fervent breathings,—the ardent longings, which ascend from a believer's heart, gather and accumulate in the upper skies; and when most he needs Divine grace and strength, they descend in covenant blessings upon his soul. No real believing prayer is ever lost, even as the moisture exhaled from earth is never lost. That thin, almost invisible vapour which the morning's sun has caught up, returns again—distilling in gentle dews or falling in plentiful rain,—watering the earth and making it to bring forth and bud. That feeble desire, that faint breathing of the soul after God, shall never perish: it was, perhaps, so weak and tremulous,—so mixed with fear and anxiety,—so burdened with complaint and sin, that you could scarcely discern it to be real prayer, and yet, ascending from a heart inhabited by the Holy Spirit, it was accepted by God, and was presented by our great High Priest, 'with the much incense' before the throne. Around that throne, these prayers are gathering—like clustering angels—and although the 'vision may tarry,' yet, waiting in humble faith God's time, these prayers will come back, bringing *help* and *deliverance*; so that the believer shall exclaim,—'Lord, I thank Thee, Thou hast heard my cry. Thou hast kept my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice!'"

HOLINESS SEEKS HOLINESS.

He that is holy follows after more holiness. Not only so, but he seeks holiness in others and rejoices in it whenever he finds it. He delights in the company of holy people, in the reading of holy books, in the indulgence of holy thoughts, in the practice of holy works; but especially does he delight in the presence of the Holy God. He rests in Him. He is bound to Him in a union strong as the universe, and lasting as eternity. *He that is thus joined unto the Lord is one spirit* (1 Cor. vi, 17).

MORE MERCIES THAN AFFLICTIONS.

Is there a man living who has received more evil at the hands of the Lord than good? Nay, the question may be asked, Has any man living ever received *any* evil at the hands of God? Is He capable of doing evil? Can the sun give darkness? No more can God communicate evil. What we *think* evil, is really good in the results, if not in the appearance and experience. But suppose, for a moment, we yield to human frailty, and look upon evils as coming from God, then are not our evils infinitely less than our mercies? And, as Job inquired, "Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?" If a man gave us a thousand pounds, ought we to grumble if soon after he was pleased to ask for a hundred farthings back again? A man was once afflicted for two years, who, for forty-eight years had had no sickness at all. He became impatient, and murmured, until he began to think that the Lord might have given him forty-eight years of sickness, and only two of health. This thought turned his murmuring into praise.

We may easily count our afflictions; but who can count his mercies? Have we had sorrows? Our joys have been far more numerous. Have we lost things which we thought valuable and precious? We have gained those which have

more than supplied their place. We have had more years of health than of sickness; more happiness than distress; more friends than foes; more deliverances than falls; more cheery days of sunshine than nights of dejection and fear. God has often permitted afflictions to come upon us on purpose to make a way for the increase of greater mercies; as a father destroys the child's toys to make place for something better; as a benevolent man may take off the rags of a pauper to clad him in cleaner and finer clothing; as a landlord may pull down his tenant's house to erect him a comelier and more suitable building. God thus allowed Joseph to lose his liberty and character for a time, that the way might be opened to the right hand of Pharaoh. God permitted Daniel to be cast into the den of lions that he might attain to the premiership of the kingdom of Babylon.

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE.

A Christian hope has certain connections, by which it may at once be recognised. It is closely associated with Christ: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Here Christ and hope are synonymous. Christ is the believer's hope, and the believer's hope is Christ. So that if we have the Christian hope, we have Christ in us. It is associated with *rejoicing*; "and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." The Christian hope makes us happy by the blessed influence it exercises upon us, and the glorious prospects it places before us. It is associated with *life*, "a lively hope." It lives in us; we feel its motions, we enjoy its peace; we daily experience its growth. It is a hope "*in God*," in His mercy to pardon, in His grace to help, in His Spirit to teach and sanctify, in His power to defend and save. It is "a good hope," in its nature, its origin, its influences, its objects, and its fruits. It is a "glorious hope," shone upon by the radiancy of the Divine countenance; lit up with the cheerful rays of the Divine promises; reflecting, as in a finely polished mirror, the things upon which it steadfastly looks. Its use is most important. "We are saved

by hope," the apostle says. In the time of storm and tempest on the ocean of life, hope is an anchor which, cast beneath the throne in the vail, saves us from sinking in despair, or drifting away on to the rocks of unbelief. In the time of severe trial from Satan, hope seizes the promise and the Promise-Giver, and saves us from being led away by the enemy's power or subtlety. As hope to the child that has lost his way ; as hope to the tradesman who has just begun business, or is in danger of failing ; as hope to the soldier in the prospect of battle, or in actual engagement ; as hope to the racer in the Olympic games, contending for the goal, so is hope to the Christian ; it sustains him, it comforts him, it encourages him, it nerves him. My brother, is your hope a *Christian* hope, as examined by these marks ? If so, hold it fast, as a treasure beyond all earthly price. Nourish it daily. Let it constantly expand and develop until it shall be swallowed up like the blossom, in the fruit which it shall yield.

USE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE.

A Christian can no more do without the means of grace than a new-born babe can live without the breast, or a labouring man can work without food, or an artist can paint without colours. It is by a use of the means of grace that we derive the supply of our spiritual necessities by which we are strengthened for the duties and conflicts of the Christian life. And as a babe could not live unless it receive nourishment, and the labourer could not work unless he received food, so we cannot live to God nor work for Him unless we obtain Divine nourishment through the means of grace. Our souls no more possess life in themselves than our bodies. Without the bread of heaven to feed them, they pine. Without the water of life to refresh them, they sink in languor. Without the clothing of Christ's righteousness, they perish in starvation. " Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The means

specified here, is the throne of grace; the use of this means is coming boldly unto it; the purpose of the use is to obtain mercy, &c. The apostle says again, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." But how are we to maintain our Christian stability? He informs us, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Here we see that the use of the means is intimately connected with the end. So St. Peter teaches us that if we would not be blind, barren, or fall; if we would endure as good soldiers, and receive "the crown of righteousness" in heaven, we must "Give all diligence to add to our faith, virtue," &c. Why should we not be as deeply convinced of the necessity of the use of the means in order to the end, in the spiritual life, as we are of the use of means to the end in the temporal life?

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

How hath He loved us? ask the star
That, on its wondrous mission sped,
Hung trembling o'er that manger scene
Where He, the Eternal, bowed His head;
He, who of earth doth seal the doom,
Found in her lowliest inn—no room.

Judea's mountains, lift your voice,
Deep legends of His love to tell;
Thou favoured Olivet, so oft
At prayerful midnights love so well;
And Cedron's brook, whose rippling wave
Frequent His wearied feet did lave.

How hath He loved us? ask the band
That fled His woes with faithless haste;
Ask the weak friend's denial tone,
Scarce by His bitterest tears effaced;
Ask of the traitor's kiss, and see
What Jesus hath endured for thee.

Ask of Gethsemane, whose dew
 Shrank from the moisture strangely red,
 Which, in that unwatched hour of pain,
 His agonising temples shed ;
 The scourge, the thorn, whose anguish sore,
 Like the unanswering lamb, He bore.

How hath He loved us ? ask the Cross,
 The Roman spear, the shrouded sky ;
 Ask of the sheeted dead, who burst
 Their cerements at His fearful cry :
 Oh ! ask no more ! but bow thy pride,
 And yield thy heart to Him who died.—*Anon.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

(Twenty-ninth Meeting.)

FORESEEING TRIALS.

ALTHOUGH in the general we know not what a day may bring forth, yet there may be times when we see in the future, not far away, some special trials destined to meet us. What is our duty in relation to them? Should we be fearful, dismayed, anxious, and seek to avert or to avoid them? No. Our duty is manfully to prepare for them in the present: to arm ourselves now, and stand ready prepared every moment for the conflict. In this way we may be said to conquer the trials before they come. It was thus Christ met the conflict of the crucifixion and its antecedents, and conquered. In the hour of prayerful struggle in the garden He made Himself ready for the Cross, as by His previous life He prepared for the struggle of the garden. Therefore, when the betrayal came, the arrest, the trial, the condemnation, the scoffs, the bearing of the cross, and the final tragedy, there was no trembling or shrinking on His part. He past through it all

with a calm dignity and a glorious victory which only such a preparation could give. The apostles, while He prayed, slept, and lost the opportunity of fortifying themselves for the trial, and hence, they were cowards and renegades. They all forsook Him and fled. They had not prayed, but slept, and now in trial they were like Samson without his talisman of hair,—shorn of their strength.

The wisest way, then, is to put our armour on, and stand equipped every moment; and by the strength of our God to move on in the way of duty to the end. We shall find that the rough place seen in the distance will become smooth when we come to it; that the mountain will be a plain; that the black cloud will be fringed with light; that the dreaded Esau will be a friend; and the cold, dark waters divided for us to pass triumphantly into the promised land. But if we go on to meet the anticipated trials, as the disciples, without a previous prayerful preparation, trusting to the impulse or accident of the time, we shall, like them, shrink away in cowardice, or be crushed under the pressure of their burden.

CONSTRAINING INFLUENCE OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

The Apostle Paul says, "The love of Christ constraineth us;" not the love of Christ *ought*, or *shall*, or *did*, but it *DOES*. The love of Christ is of little use to us in experience or practice unless it is a power now living within us, and moving us to deeds which correspond with its high and blessed nature.

We may easily see how the love of Christ constrained St. Paul and his fellow apostles, by studying the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. The history of the Church furnishes innumerable illustrations of the constraining influence of the Saviour's love. But what will the knowledge of all these facts avail us if *we* are not possessed of and constrained by the love of Christ?

There is no love which constrains like the love of Christ. Talk of heroes, martyrs, warriors; there are none like those produced by the love of Christ. Talk of self-denial, self-mor-

tification, benevolence, philanthropy, almsgiving; where can be found the equal to what have come forth of Christ's constraining love? Talk of religion, happiness, peace, unity, power, zeal, holiness, noble aims, grand purposes, fearless actions, are there any comparable with those which emanate from the constraining love of Christ in the heart?

The love of Christ, must be more than a fact in history, in doctrine, in creed, in hymns, in sermons, in intellect; it must be a fact in the *heart*; and not until this is the case shall we feel its constraining force. It must be in us like the pent-up fire of nature, which can only find relief by breaking every barrier; and showing itself in deeds which shall bring honour to His name; or it must be in us like life in the seed or the tree, which, acted upon by proper means, constrains its subject, until it comes out in lovely buds, fragrant blossoms, and luxuriant fruit.

In one word, if the love of Christ is in us, it will constrain us, not so much in similar ways to what it does other Christians, as in ways it constrained Christ Himself, according to our capacities, circumstances, and obligations. Let us think of the ways in which it constrained Him, and endeavour to give analogous signs and proofs of its constraining influence within us.

DEFECTIVE FAMILY RELIGION.

A Christian family is "a church in the house." The father is the priest of it. As such, he ought to walk before his "house with a perfect heart." Upon him depends, very much, the unity, peace, and happiness of the family church. But where inconsistency in religion characterises the father in the household, the evil is deep and lasting upon every member of it. John Bunyan gives the character of such a professor, and his ruinous influence upon his family, in the following words:—"I have been in his family, said Christian of Talkative, and have observed him both at home and abroad; and I know what I say of him is the truth. His house is as empty of religion

as the white of an egg is of savour. There is neither prayer nor sign of repentance for sin; yea the brute in his kind serves God far better than he. He is the very stain, reproach, and shame of religion to all that know him; it can hardly have a good word in all that end of the town where he dwells through him. Thus say the common people of him—'A saint abroad, and a devil at home.' His poor family find it so. He is such a churl; such a railer at, and so unreasonable with his servants that they neither know how to do for or to speak to him. Men that have any dealings with him say it is better to deal with a turk than with him, for fairer dealings they shall have at his hands. This Talkative, if it be possible, will go beyond them, defraud, beguile, and overreach them. Besides, he brings up his sons to follow his steps; and if he finds in any of them a 'foolish timorousness' (for so he calls the first appearance of tender conscience) he calls them fools and blockheads, and by no means will employ them in much, or speak to their commendation before others. For my part, I am of opinion that he has by his wicked life caused many to stumble and fall; and will be, if God prevents not, the ruin of many more."

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS FIRE.

The Holy Spirit is compared to fire in several places of Scripture. John the Baptist declared that the One who came after him should baptize them with fire (Matt. iii, 11). He descended at the Pentecost in the form of "cloven tongues like as of fire" (Acts ii, 3). St. Paul, in reference to this view of Him, says, "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thes. v, 19).

First, it is the nature of fire to consume certain materials which are thrown upon it, or with which it comes in contact. The Holy Spirit, coming into our hearts, consumes the lusts of our flesh, the pride of life, self-love, and whatsoever is contrary to His blessed attributes.

Secondly, fire is refining in its powers. The holy Spirit changes the heart, and refines all its faculties and affections.

Thirdly, fire yields comfort to them who are distressed with cold, revives the faint, and conduces to activity in those who are benumbed. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter of the sorrowful, the reviver of the lukewarm, and the energy of the weak.

Fourthly, fire is useful for many purposes in the social and public life. The Holy Spirit serves ten thousand gracious purposes in the individual, social, and public religion of man.

Fifthly, fire gives light in darkness, and serves as a guide to them who travel in dangerous places. The Holy Spirit is the light of dark minds, and the guide of His people in the dangerous ways of life.

Let us guard against quenching this holy fire within us. If He be quenched, then whence will come the consumption of our sins, the refining of our corruptions, the comfort of broken hearts, the assistance we need in the work of salvation, and the light we require in the darkness of this world? Rather every moment let us say :

“ O that in me the sacred Fire
Might now begin to glow ;
Burn up the dross of base desire,
And make the mountain flow.”

LOSS OF THE WILL.

It is when our wills come in collision with the will of God that we feel miserable ; but when they are lost in His, that is, fully concur in it, wishing nothing, praying for nothing, seeking nothing, and desiring nothing but His will ; it is then, I say, that we are happy. Whatever occurs, then, is right to us. We have no word to say, excepting that of acquiescence and praise. It may cross our feelings, or our apparent interests ; still we are thankful that it is the will of God, and therefore our will ; and having what we will, we cannot complain. Dr. Payson, when the subject of excruciating pain, just before his death, exclaimed : “ Oh, what a blessed thing it is to lose one's will.

Since I have lost my will I have found happiness ! There can be no such thing as disappointment to me, for I have no desire but that God's will may be accomplished." And One greater than Payson, found the blessedness of losing His will in that of His eternal Father. "My meat," He said, "is to do the will of Him that sent me." "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day:" and in the agony of the Garden, under an apprehension of the shame and sufferings of the Cross, said, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

SPIRITUAL STRENGTH.

"Our spiritual strength," says Upham, "will be nearly in proportion to the absence of self-dependence and self-confidence. When we are weak in ourselves, we shall not fail, if we apply to the right source for help, to be found strong in the Lord. Madam Guyon, speaking of certain temptations to which she had been exposed, says, 'I then comprehended what power a soul has which is entirely annihilated !' This is strong language ; but when it is properly understood, it conveys important truth. When we sink in ourselves, we rise in God. When we have no strength in ourselves, we have Divine power in Him who can subdue all adversaries. 'The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer ; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust ; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.'"

CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST.

If you are coming to Christ, come with confidence that He will receive you. Take His character, and especially His word, as the ground of your confidence. Surely you may confide in Him in these two respects, more than you can confide in man. Look at His five bleeding wounds, as tokens of His love to you ; look at His benignant smile lighting upon you, as so many genial rays to attract you ; look upon His heart, beating in purest sympathy with you ; look upon His glorious intercessions for you with the Father ; and with all these,

hear the gracious words proceeding from His lips: "HIM THAT COMETH UNTO ME, I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT."

With these facts before you, how can you doubt whether He will receive you? He means what He says. Let confidence, then, inspire your hope, quicken your step, and cast your soul upon Him as your only all-sufficient Saviour. "I was once called," says Mr. Jay, "to attend the dying-bed of a young female. In answer to my inquiries, she replied, 'I have little to relate as to my experience. I have been much tried and tempted; but this is my sheet-anchor: 'He hath said, Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' I know I come to Him, and I expect He will be as good as His word. Poor and unworthy as I am, He will not trifle with me, nor deceive me. It would be beneath His greatness, as well as His goodness, to do that.'"

"While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyes shall close in death,
When I rise to worlds unknown,
And behold Thee on Thy throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

THE PROMISES CONDITIONAL.

Notwithstanding the promises of God are so "exceeding great and precious" they are all *conditional*. The promise of Christ to the world as a Saviour, was without condition, because infinite wisdom knew the simple impossibility of the world complying with any condition upon which *such* a gift could have been suspended. But every promise of good in Him, purchased by His blood, is given upon condition. Is pardon promised? It is upon the condition of *faith*. Is holiness? upon the same condition. Is perseverance? upon condition of giving all diligence. Is grace to help in time of need? You must go boldly to the throne of grace. Is deliverance from trouble? you must call upon God. Do you receive from Him? It is when you ask. Does He promise that you shall find?

It is when you seek. Does He engage to open the door of mercy and heaven? It is when you knock.

Let us not forget this feature of the promises. It is complying with the conditions that gives us a hold of them, and makes them ours. They are *then* Yea and Amen to us. They become as true in their fulfilment as they are in their revelation. The blessings of which they speak are as much facts as the words which speak of the blessings.

When we can, by the indwelling Spirit, submit to the terms of the promise, we honour God's truth and enrich our own souls. "Promises are like the clothes we wear," says Gurnal. "If there be heat in the body to warm them, they warm us; but if there be none, they give none. So when there is a living faith the promise will afford a warm comfort; but in a dead, unbelieving heart, it lies cold and ineffectual; it has no more effect than pouring a cordial down the throat of a corpse. Again, the promises do not throw out comfort as fire throws out heat, for then we should only need to go to them in order to be warmed; their heat is like the fire in the flint, which must be struck out by force, and this force can only be applied by faith."

I AM WHAT I AM.

Though you may not have all the graces of the Spirit in that number and perfection, which you know you ought to have, yet be thankful, brother, that there is any change wrought in you, and that you possess any evidences of the Christian character. Hold fast whereunto you have attained, and give all diligence to go on unto perfection. John Newton, in his old age, when his sight had become so dim that he was unable to read, hearing the Scripture repeated, "By the grace of God I am what I am," paused for some moments, and then uttered this affecting soliloquy:—"I am not what I ought to be. Ah! how imperfect and deficient! I am not what I wish to be. I abhor that which is evil, and I would cleave to that which is good. I am not what I hope to be. Soon, soon shall I put

off with mortality all sin and imperfection. Though I am not what I ought to be, yet I can truly say I am not what I once was—a slave of sin and Satan; and I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge, ‘By the grace of God I am what I am.’”

PERSEVERANCE.

The way to come to the end of the Christian journey is to persevere; and the way to persevere is to keep on *now*, *i. e.* in every moment as it comes. Let the *now*, whenever it is, find you proportionably advanced, as *it* has, towards the final one that shall come. St. Peter plainly sets forth the philosophy of final perseverance in 2 Cor. i, 5—11:—“Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure: for IF YE DO THESE THINGS ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

JOY IN SORROW.

If all along our earthly way
 No warmth of brightness fell,
 But grief kept with us day by day,
 From morn to midnight bell—
 And yet at last the dawning light
 Of heaven's full splendour fringed earth's night—
 Who could say aught of cross or blight
 Save—“All was ordered well”?

But now, though every mournful year
 Seems strewn with loss and pain,
 As woodland walks when leaves lie sere,
 Yet hath it herbs of gain—
 Like evergreens to front the gale,
 Rise Faith and Hope, and on the trail
 Red footprints of our Lord we hail—
 Each mile makes less remain.

No needless grief lies in His plan,
 No wanton prick of thorn ;
 He was on earth a sorrowing Man,
 By toil and travel worn.
 Up! laggard heart, and praises lift—
 True good from seeming evil sift ;
 Life hath no storm, nor blinding drift,
 But with Him may be borne!

Anon.

CHAPTER XXX.

(Thirtieth Meeting.)

LIVING EPISTLES.

WHEN you approach the presence of God in prayer lay open before Him the whole of your heart, that He may write upon it the things of His mind ; when you search the Scriptures let your memories, understandings, and consciences, take therefrom its sacred and truthful impressions ; when you go to hear the Word read or expounded allow it to inscribe its own records upon you ; and lie passive in the hands of the blessed Spirit, that through all these and other direct instruments, He may write upon you all the things which you should receive. And having been written upon thus by the finger of God, do not lie dormant, inactive, or as an old useless

book, thrown aside as refuse or waste paper; but go forth as *living epistles*, showing in a godly walk and holy conversation, your contents as written by God. Let your life be so open and ingenuous that men can "read" you, and so read, that you may be known of them, and so known, that they may feel the force of truth and believe in the power of Christianity.

Often examine yourselves, to see if there are any erasures of the truth from you, or any malconstruction of the truth in you, or any blotches or spots received by you. If so, bring yourselves at once to Him who shall revise and correct. Be as perfect living epistles as you can, under the authorship of God the Holy Ghost.

Oh, these "living epistles" are what the Church and the world need. We cannot do without the *written* epistles of Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and John; but Christians, as "living epistles," the practical illustrations of the *written* epistles, through the power of the blessed Spirit, are the epistles which are needed to be read in everyday life, which no one can dispute, can criticise, can reject as spurious—epistles which shall prove the truth of the written ones by their consistency with them, and which the written ones in return shall prove to be exemplifications of their truthfulness.

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

1. The *nature* of Church fellowship is the communion that the members enjoy one with another—(1) In duties (Rom. xii, 6; 1 Cor. xii, 1; 1 Thess. v, 17, 18; Jas. v, 16). (2) In ordinances (Heb. x, 24; Acts ii, 46). (3) In graces, love, joy, &c. (Heb. x, 24; Mal. iii, 16; 3 Cor. viii, 4). (4) In interests, spiritual and sometimes temporal (Rom. xii, 4, 13; Heb. xiii, 16). (5) In sufferings (Rom. xv, 1, 2; Gal. vi, 1, 2; Rom. xii, 15).

2. The *end* of Church fellowship is—(1) The maintenance and exhibition of a system of sound doctrine (2 Tim. i, 13; 1 Tim. vi, 3, 4; 1 Cor. viii, 5, 6; Heb. ii, 1; Eph. iv, 21). (2) The support of the ordinances of gospel worship in their

purity and simplicity (Deut. xii, 31, 32; Rom. xv, 6). (3) The promotion of holiness in all manner of conversation (Phil. i, 27; ii, 15, 16; 2 Pet. iii, 11; Phil. iv, 8).

3. The *duties* of Church fellowship are—(1) Earnest desire to keep peace and unity (Eph. iv, 3; Phil. ii, 2, 3; iii, 15, 16). (2) Bearing of one another's burdens (Gal. vi, 1, 2). (3) Earnest endeavours to prevent each other's stumbling (1 Cor. x, 2, 3; Heb. x, 24—27; Rom. xiv, 13). (4) Steadfast continuance in the faith and worship of the gospel (Acts ii, 42). (5) Praying for and sympathising with each other (1 Sam. xii, 23; Eph. vi, 18).

4. The *advantages* of Church fellowship are—(1) Peculiar incitements to holiness (Ecc. iv, 11). (2) There are some promises applicable to none but those who attend the ordinances of God and hold communion with the saints (Ps. xcii, 13; Isa. xxv, 6; Ps. cxxxii, 13—16; xxxvi, 8; Jer. xxxi, 12). (3) Such are under the watchful eye and care of their pastor (Heb. xiii, 7). (4) Subject to the friendly reproof or kind advice of the saints (1 Cor. xii, 25). (5) Their zeal and love are animated by mutual and reciprocal conversation (Mal. iii, 16; Prov. xxvii, 17). (6) They may restore each other if they fall (Ecc. iv, 10; Gal. vi, 1). (7) Can more easily promote and spread the gospel.

GOD'S WATCHFUL CARE.

Alexander once told his soldiers, "I wake that ye may sleep." "He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep." "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous." "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

Do not these and similar passages show you that God is more watchful of His people than Alexander of his soldiers? Did he never sleep? Did he never forsake them? As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. As a mother's tenderness, gentleness, faithfulness, so is the Lord's care of His people, only infinitely more.

He thinks for you, that you may have no anxious thoughts

for yourself. He watches you in the darkness of night, and protects you in the helplessness of slumber. Lest you should stumble or dash your foot against a stone, He bears you up and encampeth round about you. "He giveth His beloved sleep," when otherwise they would be restless, fearful, dismayed. "I will guide thee with mine eye," He says, showing that He is not a blind God, or one of mere power and authority, guiding with commandment and coercion. His eye, in its penetration of all present and coming danger—His eye, in its discovery of every concealed enemy—His eye, in its compassion, benignity and love, shall guide you.

Thou child of God, remember thy Father is ever awake in watchful care of you, that you may live in peace and dwell in safety. With this assurance you may say in every season of danger,—

"Jesus protects; my fears be gone!

What can the Rock of Ages move?

Safe in Thy arms I lay me down,

Thy everlasting arms of love.

I rest beneath the Almighty's shade;

My griefs expire, my troubles cease;

Thou, Lord, on whom my soul is stay'd,

Wilt keep me still in perfect peace."

CHRIST IS YOURS.

Is Christ really yours? Is He *in* you the "Hope of Glory"? Does He "dwell in your heart by faith"? "Wherefore, then," as John Arndt says, "make use of Him, for the Medicine of thy soul, to restore thee; thy Meat and Drink, to refresh thee; thy Fountain of Life, to quench thy soul's thirst; thy Light in darkness; thy Joy in gladness; thine Advocate against the accuser; Wisdom against thy folly; Righteousness against thy sin; Sanctification against thy unworthiness; Redemption against thy bondage; thy Victory against all thine enemies; thy Champion against all thy

persecutors; thy Way against thy wandering; Thy truth against lying and vanity; thy Life against death; thy everlasting Father, when thou wast an orphan and desolate; thine Everlasting High Priest, who intercedeth for thee."

THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER.

"Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. iii, 12—14).

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him" (1 John iii, 18, 19).

"Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for He is kind to the unthankful and the evil" (Luke vi, 35).

"Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love" (Rom. xii, 10).

"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. iv, 32).

CHRIST AN EXAMPLE OF DOING GOOD.

"Jesus Christ went about doing good, and the good which he accomplished in His short career was immense. Yet the powers which He had, as instruments for doing good, were just such as we have—excepting, of course, His mediatorial fitness for atonement, and His miraculous endowments. When he went about doing good He was in the likeness of sinful flesh—His body having the same infirmities as ours, His feet as liable to weariness as ours, His heart as liable to be dis-

tressed as ours, His sense of hungering and thirst as enfeebling as ours, His feelings under opposition, reproach, and pain, as keen as ours, His mind developed and growing by discipline like ours; and yet what large amount of good did He achieve with such powers as we have? Why cannot we employ our bodies and minds like Him? He came to be our example, and to demonstrate practically the possibility of pleasing God and of benefiting the world by our life. To make an atonement for sin, and to work His miracles, are impossible to us; not so His humility, His love, His patience, His devotedness to God, His prayerfulness, His concern for souls, His readiness to serve, His contempt of the world, and His zeal for the Divine glory. Christ exemplified all these, and more than these, with such powers as we have for usefulness in our day. The same powers which we employ in amassing wealth, in attaining rank, in procuring fame, He employed in doing good. Were we to employ our present powers as He did, we would do good as He did, and we would walk, even as He walked, in labour and usefulness."

"Thy bright example I pursue,
To Thee in all things rise;
Let all I think, or speak, or do,
Be one great sacrifice."

SIGNS OF A DECAYING CHRISTIAN.

1. When you are so indifferent to frequent the house of God that you can come, or not come, at your own pleasure.
2. When in your most solemn worship you are quickly weary, without any real cause.
3. When few sermons will please you: either you like not the *matter*, or *manner*, or *man*, or *place*.
4. When you think you know enough.
5. When a little thing will keep you from the Lord's table or communion with the people of God.
6. When you have usually no strong disposition to prayer.

7. When reading the Holy Scriptures is more burdensome than delightful.

8. When you are curious and inquisitive after new things rather than sound doctrines.

9. When you are so little prepared for the public services that they come before you think of them or care for them.

10. When you come to the means more to be seen of the brethren than of Christ.

11. When you would rather the name of Christ, and the credit of His gospel, suffered by your silence, than appear as its witness at the risk of some personal suffering or disparagement.

12. When a small offence so irritates you that you commit great sin by way of self-satisfaction.

13. When you judge of Christ's people more by their *words* than their *spirit*.

14. When your sins do not much trouble you *while they are kept from public view*.

15. When you love least those Christians that deal most faithfully with you in opening your sores, and tendering you remedies.

16. When you pray more to have afflictions removed than sanctified.

17. When, under calamity, you find no necessity to humble yourselves by fasting and prayer.

18. When the thought of your bosom lust, or any other sin, is more prevalent with you than that of pleasing God.

19. When you are curious about the lesser matters of God's law, and careless about the weightier.

20. When the Holy Spirit's help to the great work of mortification seems not of absolute necessity to you.

21. When you are so ignorant of your spiritual standing that you know not whether you grow or decay.

22. When increase of time in Christ's acquaintance worketh decrease of affection to Christ's people.

23. When great sins get smaller in your view, and small sins seem none at all.

24. When your tongue is frequent in complaining of lesser miseries, and silent in praising for greater mercies.

25. When your sense of the great worth of time is so small that you are prodigal of its use.

26. When a watchfulness of the life and conversation is more occasional than habitual.

27. When care for your body is usually most pleasant, and care for your soul usually most irksome.

28. When you are much a stranger to the practical part of meditation on the word and works of God.

29. When thoughts of Jesus dying for your sins little dissuade you from an unchristian conversation.

30. When you can remember past sins without loathing.

31. When you can see the dead carried to their long home, and be as unconcerned as though yourselves were exempted from the like state of mortality.

32. When you find greater satisfaction in the company of the world than with the people of God.

LOVE TO GOD'S PEOPLE.

Love to God's people is an evidence of the spiritual life within us, and the absence of it a proof of death :—" We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John, iii, 14).

Love to God's people must be more than verbal or professional. It must be a *principle* in the heart, evidenced by action in the life, giving us a consciousness that we are of the truth, and that we are sincere before Him: " My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him" (1 John, iii, 18, 19).

Love to God's people is one characteristic of him who shall dwell in the " holy hill" of Jehovah. " Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?

He in whose eyes a vile person is contemned: but he honoureth them that fear the Lord" (Ps. xv, 1, 4).

Love to God's people has prosperity promised to it. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (Ps. cxxii, 6).

Love to God's people engages His remembrance and shall have His blessing. "God is not unrighteousness, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb. vi, 10). "Blessed be he that blesseth thee; and cursed be he that curseth thee" (Num. xxiv, 9).

RENOUNCING ALL SIN.

If you would live in a state of reconciliation with God, please Him, and grow in conformity to His image, you must renounce all sin. It is iniquity only that separates between you and God. "If thou wouldst have God pleased," says Joseph Alleine, "turn every sin out of doors; 'pluck it out and cast it from thee.' If thou art of them that have pleasure in unrighteousness, the Lord hath no pleasure in thee. He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; evil shall not dwell with Him; the foolish shall not stand in His sight; He hateth all the workers of iniquity. See that thou abandon every sin that thou knowest; spare not one *Agag*, not a right eye, not an *Herodias*; for then God will not spare thee. Give the darling of thy bosom a bill of divorce. Say to all thy idols, 'Get thee hence.' God will not look to that man who looks pleasantly upon any sin. Though thou be very diligent in God's service, and presentest Him with multitudes of sacrifices and many prayers, He will be pleased with nothing, but hide His face and stop His ears whilst thou keepest thine iniquities in thine hands. O look into thy hands, look into thy heart, look into thy house, into thy shop, thy trade, thy calling! See if there be not some way of wickedness that thou art found in. Thou canst not have peace with God, nor He pleasure with thee, till this be removed."

ANSWERING PRAYER.

I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace ;
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.

'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer ;
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.

I hoped that in some favoured hour
At once He'd answer my request ;
And by His love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins and give me rest.

Instead of this he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea, more, with His own hand He seem'd
Intent to aggravate my woe ;
Cross'd all the fair designs I schem'd,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

"Lord, why is this ?" I trembling cried,
"Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death ?"
"'Tis in this way," the Lord replied,
"I answer prayer for grace and faith.

"These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free ;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou may'st seek thy all in Me."

John Newton.

CHAPTER XXXI.

*(Thirty-first Meeting.)***EXPECTING THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

ARE we not very frequently in error in our expectations of the manner of the coming of the Holy Spirit? Do we not look for some rushing power, some breaking-up force, some overwhelming energy, some vehement excitements different to what we have ever experienced? Do we not oftentimes, in our prayers, dictate to the Almighty the way in which He should give us the Holy Spirit?

Is not the Holy Spirit already given in the shining light of truth all around us? Why, then, should we look for the blazing comet? Let us open our eyes and take in the genial, steady rays of the sun. Is not the Holy Spirit striving with us, nay, working in us, through a variety of means? Why, then, should we ask for the earthquake to terrify us, or the irresistible power to strike us? Let us rather yield to His striving, and submit to His operations, and these shall save us.

While we are excited with these expectations of the Spirit in some extraordinary manner, we may neglect the usual and more effectual modes of His procedure; consequently we may become less prepared for His extraordinary; and *should* He in any way display Himself as we expect, when the display come it may either have no effect upon us or an effect which would only be spasmodic and transient. If the daytime light does not suffice to show a man his path, will the sheet-lightning or the aurora borealis? If the gentle, calm influences of the atmosphere will not suffice for a man's life, will the occasional sudden gales of wind? "The man who neglects the seed is not likely to have a harvest suddenly lavished upon him. The man who treats with contempt a small favour from his prince cannot calculate on a more splendid largess."

May we forcibly feel that to trifle with or neglect the tender, gracious, ordinary influences of the Spirit is not the way to be favoured with more abundant power! Let us make good use of the ordinary, and we shall be the better prepared to appreciate and profit by the extraordinary, when favoured with them.

NO COMFORT IN LOOKING TO OURSELVES.

In the time of our depression let us not expect to derive any comfort from looking to ourselves. To do this would be like looking for light in midnight darkness, or streams in drougthy deserts.

Our own feelings can yield us no reliable comfort. They are full of mutability; to-day we are well, and our spiritual experience, taking its character thence, is bright and strong; but to-morrow, it may be, outward things are changed—the sun does not shine, the wind is chill, the physical system is out of order, and we are sad, low, gloomy. In this way feelings rise and fall, ebb and flow like the tide of the ocean. What reliable comfort, therefore, can we derive from our *feelings*?

Neither can we derive comfort from our *doings*. Though doings may be a standard by which to judge of character in general, yet to seek comfort from them in the time of our depression would yield us no gain. The very state of our minds would throw an aspect of darkness over them which would destroy every source of comfort in them, even if there were any. But, independent of the shades which our minds would cast upon them, what are our doings in themselves, or as measured by the perfect standard of holy law? Alas! our doings as reflected upon either by our depressed minds or the holy law, contain no power to give comfort.

If the wounded man is always looking at his wounds and brooding over his pains, he will get thence no succour and restoration. He must look to the physician, to apply the means, and so give him comfort. If the children of Israel in

the wilderness had only looked down to the stings of the serpents, and lamented the sufferings they had occasioned, their healing would have been prevented by death. They looked off the sores to the remedy, and as many as looked lived. This is just the course for you to adopt, my brother. Forget yourself in thoughts of Jesus. Lose sight of yourself in the glorious vision of the sympathising Intercessor in heaven. He is the Comforter, and by His Spirit and His word, can send floods of consolation into your cast-down soul.

SELF-CONDEMNATION.

We must distinguish between the condemnation of God and *self*-condemnation. We may condemn ourselves when God does not condemn us. When we measure our attainments in grace by the standard which He has given, or weigh ourselves in the balances which He has adjusted, we may see how far we come short of the just requirements, and condemn ourselves because we are so much wanting; but it does not follow that God condemns us. He may see that we have done what we could, and *commend* us. Our best efforts, although they are defective, and fail to realise to us our hearts' desires, are approved of Him. His condemnation is only given when we *voluntarily* neglect duty and commit sin.

This consideration may greatly help us in the way of comfort and encouragement, if we allow it to have influence upon our minds.

COMPLETE OBEDIENCE.

God has given no useless law—no law to be studied, admired, and then neglected or despised. *All* are obligatory; and to break one is to be guilty of the whole. To tithe mint and cummin, and omit judgment, mercy, and faith—to be zealously affected for human ordinances, ceremonies, traditions, and keep from the weightier matters of the law—is the obedience of the Pharisee, and not of the Christian. Both tables of the law

are written by God and enjoined upon our observance. . . Both must stand or fall together. Not only are we to have morality before men, but piety before God; not only do what is right before our fellows, but before our Judge; not only to give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, but unto God the things that are God's.

This is the obedience the gospel requires, and the obedience which it enables the Christian to render. He respects all the commandments, and walks in all the statutes of the Lord, so far, at least, as his motives and aims are concerned; and wherein there is any deficiency he looks for *perfection* to Christ, as he looked for the grace which enabled him to obey in any degree.

ZEAL AND ACTIVITY.

"There is nothing," says an old writer, "with which God is more displeased than remissness, lifelessness, and indifference in religion. Lukewarm water is not a greater offence to the stomach than the lukewarm professor is to God; and therefore He will spew such a one out of His mouth. Christians, where is your zeal for the Lord of hosts? Christ's redeemed must be zealous of good works; 'not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' Not only do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, but do it with all your heart. The Lord loveth a willing servant. Bestir yourselves for the Lord. Be ye followers of Christ, who went up and down doing good. Every Christian should be a common blessing, a public good. This is to be the 'children of your Father which is in heaven,' who is good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all His works; and be sure that the Father doth best love that child who is like Himself. A private, narrow spirit is a low and a base spirit, unworthy of a Christian. A catholic, communicative spirit is full of great desires and great designs. A large heart set upon doing good—whose fire, though ever hottest within, will be breaking forth and provoking others—whose love will not be

confined to a party, but gladly and thankfully owneth Christ wherever it sees Him,—this catholic spirit, I say, is the glory of religion, the Church's blessing, and God's delight."

"It is good to be ZEALOUSLY AFFECTED always in a GOOD THING" (Gal. iv. 18).

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, DO IT WITH THY MIGHT; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecc. ix, 10).

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

"SON, GO WORK TO-DAY IN MY VINEYARD."

STRAITENED DESIRES.

Our desires for spiritual things should not be straitened; they should have free growth and enlargement, until they compass all the will and all the promises of God. There is no limit to the grace and glory which He makes over to us in the Gospel; we are not, therefore, straitened in Him, but in ourselves. We should labour to nourish and expand our desires, so that our hearts thereby may be enlarged to take in all the mighty good which is our privilege on earth and in heaven.

"I may say concerning our strait desires," says Jeremiah Burroughs, "as the prophet did to Joshua (2 Kings, xiii, 13, 18, 19), when the prophet bade him strike upon the earth, and he struck thrice; the prophet was angry and said, 'Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times, and so often shouldest thou have smitten thy enemies.' So, according to the truth and working of our desires *here*, shall we be made capable of glory *hereafter*; but now, if we be straitened in our hearts, and we desire to be in heaven, and to have some good thing there, but our hearts are not after great things, not enlarged in our desires, it will be in some measure, in some proportion, according to our desires, and therefore it is an evil thing for Christians to have their desires straitened here. There are

glorious things to be had in God, and therefore our desires should be more enlarged than they are."

"Give me the enlarged desire,
And open, Lord, my soul,
Thy own fulness to require,
And comprehend the whole :
"Stretch my faith's capacity
Wider, and yet wider still ;
Then with all that is in Thee
My soul for ever fill."

"Fulfil, fulfil my large desires,
Large as infinity ;
Give, give me all my soul requires,
All, all that is in Thee!"

DESIRING THE HIGHEST STATE OF GRACE.

"Some are very inquisitive," says Joseph Alleine, "what is the lowest degree of religion that a man may have, and go to heaven. But the sincere Christian, though satisfied that his state is safe, will rest in no attainments in grace ; but reaches forward, and presses on, 'if by any means he may attain to the resurrection of the dead.' He that doth not desire, and design, and endeavour after perfection, never yet came up to sincerity. A true believer desires holiness for holiness' sake ; and therefore is set upon perfecting holiness. Others desire it only for heaven's sake ; and therefore are only for so much of it as will bear their charges thither. They make use of holiness as a bridge to heaven ; and therefore are for no more than will just serve their turn. The true believer has a holy nature, and therefore holiness is his element and natural employment ; and he must needs desire holiness in its height, because every nature aspires after perfection in its kind. He desires not holiness merely because it is the way to heaven, but he loves heaven the better for the holy way that leads to it, and for the perfect holiness which is there."

RESTING IN THE MEANS.

It is a strong disposition of human nature to rest in the means of religion, although it never does so in the things of this world. Does the mariner rest in the means of transit to a foreign land? He *uses* them, but his mind looks away to a safe arrival in the country to which he is going. Does the soldier rest in the means of fighting? He *uses* them, but his mind is fixed upon *victory*. Does the merchant rest in the means of carrying on his merchandise? He *uses* them; but his mind rests upon the accumulation of profits. So it should be with us in regard to the means of grace. We must *use* them; but not *rest* in them—use them to bring us to the end, viz., holiness, usefulness, heaven; and in all THE GLORY OF GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

GLORIFYING GOD IN EVERY ACT.

It is a matter of wonder and gratitude that we can glorify God in any way; but how much more so that we can glorify Him in *every single act* we perform! "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x, 31).

We are too much prone to think that we must do some *great thing* to glorify God; that we must perform some imposing act of worship; that we must join others in some special demonstrations of grand devotional exercises; that we must go upon some foreign mission, or be engaged in preaching at home, or lead a life of special sanctity in seclusion, or give half of our substance to benevolent objects, or exhibit an intense and superhuman zeal which will call forth the applause of the Church. In a word, we must do something which we have no ability to do, and which God does not require us to do.

Let us guard against this error, and bring down our minds to an apprehension of the Scriptural truth, *glorifying God in every act*. This is rational as well as Scriptural. This is practicable and obligatory. We have a positive command for this. It accords with a life of faith and love. It comes

within the range of every Christian's capacities. No one can say he cannot glorify God, any more than he can say that he performs no act as a living creature. "WHATSOEVER ye do." Is there a Christian that does *nothing*? that is inert as a stone or a clod? Does he not pray? He must do it to the glory of God. Does he not sing? He must do it to the glory of God. Does he not converse? Transact business? Work in his employ? Travel? Give? Hear the Word? Read the Word? Visit the sick? He must do it to the glory of God. Does he not *eat* and *drink*? Then in these acts, ordinary, small, short, as they may be, he is to glorify God. "*Whatsoever ye do.*" This covers the *whole* ground of life. There is no *one act* of which we can form any conception, of which we are capable, but must be done to glorify God.

THE GLORIFICATION OF CHRIST BY THE SPIRIT.

The Saviour declared of the Holy Spirit that, "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you" (John xvi, 14). The way in which the Spirit glorifies Christ by showing unto us the things that He receives of Christ, is thus set forth by Archdeacon Hare:—"This is what the Comforter does through the whole of His three-fold work. In every part of it He glorifies Christ. In convincing us of sin, He convinces us of the sin of not believing in Christ. In convincing us of righteousness, He convinces us of the righteousness of Christ,—of that righteousness which was manifest in Christ's going to the Father, and which He received to bestow on all such as should believe in Him. And, lastly, in convincing us of judgment, He convinces us that the prince of this world was judged in the life and by the death of Christ. Thus, throughout, Christ is glorified; and that which the Comforter shows to us relates, in all its parts, to the life and work of the incarnate Son of God. In like manner, all the graces which the Spirit bestows are the graces which were manifested in the life of Christ. It is Christ's love that He shows to us and

gives to us, the love through which Christ laid down His life for His Church ; and Christ's joy in His communion with His Father ; and the peace which Christ had when He overcame the world ; and Christ's long suffering in praying that His murderers might be forgiven ; and Christ's bounty in giving all the treasures of heaven ; and the faithfulness of Him who is the faithful witness, Himself the truth ; and the gentleness with which Christ took up little children in His arms and blessed them ; and Christ's meekness in never answering again ; and the temperance of Christ, who made it His meat and drink to do the will of His Father.

"All these graces were manifested upon earth in their heavenly perfection, when the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in the man Christ Jesus ; and all these graces the Spirit of God desires to give to every one, so that Christ may be formed in us, and that our life may be swallowed up in His life. Thus shall we, too, glorify Christ ; and with Him we shall glorify the Father. Let us seek this glory, and not our own vain, fleeting glory, but the glory wherewith we may glorify Christ and the Father ; and this glory shall abide with us for ever."

THE NAME OF JESUS.

There is a name I love to hear,
I love to speak its worth ;
It sounds like music in mine ear—
The sweetest name on earth.

It tells me of a Saviour's love,
Who tied to set me free ;
It tells me of His precious blood—
The sinner's only plea.

It tells of one whose loving heart
Can feel my deepest woe,
Who in my sorrow bears a part
That none can bear below.

It bids my trembling soul rejoice ;
 It dries each rising tear ;
 It tells me in a "still small voice"—
 To trust and not to fear.

JESUS! the name I love so well—
 The name I love to hear!
 No saint on earth its worth can tell,
 No heart conceive how dear.

This name shall shed its fragrance still
 Along this thorny road—
 Shall sweetly smooth the rugged hill
 That leads me up to God.

And there with all the blood-bought throng,
 From sin and sorrow free,
 I'll sing the new eternal song
 Of Jesus' love for me.

F. W.

CHAPTER XXXII.

(*Thirty-second Meeting.*)

THE TWO-FOLD WITNESS.

The knowledge that we are the children of God arises from a twofold witness, viz., that of our own spirit and that of the Spirit of God. Their nature and relation is thus explained by Mr. Wesley:—"That the *testimony of the Spirit of God* must needs, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the *testimony of our own spirit*, may appear from this single consideration. We must be holy of heart and holy in life, before we can be conscious that we are so; before we can have the *testimony of our spirit*, that we are inwardly and outwardly holy. But we must love God before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness. Now, we cannot love God

till we know He loves us. "We love Him because He first loved us." And we cannot know His pardoning love to us, till His Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Since, therefore, this *testimony of His Spirit* must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our inward consciousness thereof, or the *testimony of our spirit* concerning them.

"Then, and not till then, when the Spirit of God beareth that witness to our spirit, 'God hath loved thee and given His own Son to be the propitiation for thy sins; the Son of God hath loved thee, and hath washed thee white from all thy sins in His blood.' 'We love God, because He first loved us,' and for His sake we *love our brother also*. And of this we cannot but be conscious to ourselves: we 'know the things that are freely given to us of God.' We know that we love God and keep His commandments. And 'hereby also we know that we are of God.' This is that testimony of our own spirit, which, so long as we continue to love God and keep His commandments, continues joined with the testimony of God's Spirit, 'that we are the children of God.'

"Not that I would, by any means, be understood, by anything which has been spoken concerning it, to exclude the operation of the Spirit of God, even from the 'testimony of our own spirit.' In no wise. It is He that not only worketh in us every manner of thing that is good, but also shines upon His own work, and clearly shows what He has wrought. Accordingly, this is spoken of by St. Paul, as one great end of our receiving the Spirit, 'that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God;' that He may strengthen the testimony of our conscience, touching our *simplicity and godly sincerity*, and give us to discern, in a fuller and stronger light, that we now do the things which please Him."

LEAVING THINGS WITH GOD.

If God is our Father and we are His children, why should we be so anxious about the things of life? Are not the things of life His? Has not He the control and management of them

more than we have? As a Father, whose wisdom, love, and justice we never question, we ought to leave them in His hands. Our concern should be to *love* Him and *keep* His commandments. Look at that little child, how sweet is its repose, how calm its rest, how joyful its wakeful hours, how easy its spirit! It is not wrinkled with care, or pressed down with grief, or troubled with anxious thoughts about the future. Why? Because it trusts its father for all the things of life. Behold the lily, it is clothed in all its beauty without anxiety. Our Father cares for sparrows, and flowers, and insects, will He not care for *us*?

The Apostle tells us to "be careful for nothing." Alas! how contrary we go to this advice! We are not content to be children before God, but we want to be men of wisdom and foresight, taking matters into our own hands, as though we could manage them better than He! We aspire to share in His counsels and responsibilities. We would like to help Him in governing the world. Nay, more than this; do we not sometimes wish to have things under our own direction, so that we might secure our own ends, and walk in prosperity according to our covetous wishes?

How merciful our Father is in checking us in our ambition, and keeping things in His own hands. When, for a time, He has left us to ourselves, what desolation we have rushed into?

To have the things of this life in our own control would be like the flower which would fain live in its beauty and fragrance without the light, the dews, and the air; like the earth, which would furnish itself with life and fruitfulness, without the sun; like the infant which would provide for itself without its father's labour and goodness.

Let us learn to live as children before God, and leave all things with Him as a Father to manage them for us.

EARTH AND HEAVEN.

Christian, it is well for you not to be so swallowed up in contemplations of heaven that you forget you are on earth;

nor should you be so absorbed in the things of earth as to lose sight of heaven. Let each have the claim which is its due.

It will be a good thing for you to do as John Bunyan did; "Sometimes," he says, "I look upon myself, and say, 'Where am I now?' and do quickly return answer to myself again, 'Why, I am in an evil world, a great way from heaven, in a sinful world, among devils and wicked men; sometimes benighted, sometimes beguiled, sometimes fearing, sometimes hoping, sometimes breathing, sometimes dying!' But then I turn the tables and say, 'But where shall I be shortly? where shall I see myself anon after a few times more have passed over me?' and when I can but answer this question thus:— 'I shall see myself with Jesus Christ;' this yields glory, even glory to one's spirit now."

CHRIST AND HIS CROSS.

He that would have Christ must have His cross. If you are ashamed of the cross, Christ will be ashamed of you; and hence rejecting that, He rejects you. St. Paul not only took Christ in the dignity of His person, and the saving virtue of His atonement; but he took the cross also, and holding it up to the world, he says of that what he said not of his learning, his family descent, his zeal, his converts, his holiness;—"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Is there shame in the Cross? Yes, but there is infinite glory there. Is there death in the Cross? Yes, but out of that comes everlasting life. Is there suffering in the Cross? Yes, but there is an eternal weight of glory to follow. Does the cross impose any burden? Yes, but it is like the burden of the wings to the eagle, it enables us to soar away through all things, to the glorious regions of eternity.

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.

We have in the Scriptures both commands and promises. True faith does not separate them, but believes and trusts in them both alike; that is, it obeys the one, and accepts the

other. The commandments reveal God to us as a God demanding something from us; in the promises He appears as a God offering something to us. If our faith is of the Gospel nature, it will yield implicit obedience to His requirements, while it will stretch forth its hand in assurance to accept the blessings.

Our faith is seriously defective—it partakes of guilty selfishness—if it accepts the promises and rejects the commands. God demands from us our heart, our life, our *all*, in unreserved consecration to Him; and genuine faith responds to the demand with a prompt and joyous utterance:

“Take my soul and body’s powers;
Take my memory, mind, and will;
All my goods, and all my hours,
All I know, and all I feel;
All I think, or speak, or do;
Take my heart, but make it new!”

When faith has thus obeyed God, then He, in fulfilment of His promise, bestows upon us the “plenitude of Gospel grace,” the fulness of Christ. Now faith takes another action, that of *accepting*, and receiving the offered gift it exclaims:

“Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find.”

It is in this way that *faith and obedience* are connected in Christianity. Let *us* not attempt to sever them, either in the theory we have of them, or in the life-exemplification we may endeavour to give of them before the world.

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

The Scriptures recognise defects in the patriarchs, prophets, priests, kings, and all others of whom they speak, and therefore do not recommend them to us for examples in moral and godly actions; but in Jesus Christ they discover no guile in His mouth, no sin in His nature. They speak of Him as

"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," *therefore* they present Him, and Him only, as our example in holy living:—"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii, 3, 5). "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (Pet. ii, 21). "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John ii, 6).

As God in pure human nature, He possessed such a profound consciousness of His own holiness, that He places Himself before us as our example:—"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. xi, 29). "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John xiii, 15).

It is a characteristic of a holy man, that he wishes to be like Christ; and the more intent he is upon holiness, the more he is solicitous to be conformed to his Saviour. The wife of Dr. Judson, the eminent American missionary, was one day reading to him some extracts from the public papers, in which he was compared to one or other of the apostles. He was very much grieved at the comparison, and said, "Nor do I want to be like them; I do not want to be like Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas, nor any mere man. I WANT TO BE LIKE CHRIST. We have only one perfect safe Exemplar—only One who, tempted like as we are in every point, is still without sin. I want to follow Him only, copy His teachings, drink in His spirit, place my feet in His footprints, and measure their shortcomings by these and these only. Oh, to be more like Christ."

THE FEAR OF MAN.

"The fear of man bringeth a snare." What is truer than this to Christian experience. If you fear man in family or social prayer, you will be entangled in a web which will hold you from the wrestling and prevalency of Jacob. If you fear man in the confession of Christ, you will be ensnared into trepidation or compromise, or weakness, or shame. If you

fear man in the maintenance of Christian principle in life, you will be caught in the snare of dissemblance, or inconsistency, or backsliding. If you fear man in standing up for the truth as you conscientiously believe it, you will be taken in the snare of cowardice, which cares not whether truth or error prevail.

My brother, away with the fear of man! Fear God. Stand in loving reverence before His eye. Hold yourself amenable to Him in all the religious life. Aim at His praise, honour, and glory. Do not ask, "What will others think of this saying spoken, this effort put forth, or this principle adhered to?" Rather ask, "What does God my Father think of me, and how will He judge me? Do I please Him in this act, and witness for Him in this principle? Is it my endeavour, irrespective of what men think of me, say to me, or do for me, to glorify Him in all things?"

Let this be your spirit of noble fearlessness and independence, and you are a true follower of the Saviour, the apostles, and the martyrs.

"Shall I for fear of feeble man,
The Spirit's course in me restrain?
Or undismay'd in deed and word,
Be a true witness for my Lord?

"Awed by a mortal's frown, shall I
Conceal the word of God most high
How then before Thee shall I dare
To stand, or how Thine anger bear?

"Give me Thy strength, O God of power;
Then let winds blow, or thunders roar,
Thy faithful witness will I be:
'Tis fix'd; I can do all through Thee!"

THE MOTIONS OF THE SPIRIT TO GOOD.

It is often a question in the mind of the Christian, How may I know the motions of the Spirit of God from those of

my own conscience? The following suggestions may assist in solving the query:

1. The Spirit of God not only moves us to good, but assists us in the performance of it. He helpeth our infirmities. He is the power of God within us strengthening us for the deed to which He prompts us; whereas a motion from ourselves leaves us to ourselves for the doing of it.

2. The Spirit of God moves us to good for its own beauty, loveliness, and the glory which it brings to Him; but our consciences have oftentimes selfish ends in view. They move from fear or hope—fear of punishment, or hope of reward.

3. The Spirit of God moves us to good from pure motives and for disinterested ends.

4. He moves us to good, and enables to follow after it in a right way; the way which shall accord with His own nature, with the Scriptures, with the good we pursue.

5. He moves us to good with such incentives as sustain us against all difficulties, and enable us to attain the end before us.

Watch carefully the motions of the Spirit to good. Follow them promptly and diligently. Ever pray for them. You should be more concerned for these than even the comforts of the Spirit. You may be a Christian and go to heaven without comforts; but you cannot without the Spirit and His operations. Remember, if the Spirit is a Comforter, He is before that a Convincer, a Converter, a Regenerator. If you are moved by the Spirit to works of piety, you will not lack in comforts. "The sealing work of the Spirit," says one, "whereby I cry, Abba Father, gives comfort; but the sanctifying work of the Spirit, whereby I mortify the deeds of the flesh, is the ground of that comfort."

COMPLAINING OF LEANNESS.

Leanness in the soul forms a just cause of complaint. The reasons for such a state should at once be ascertained; so that the proper measures may be used for its removal; for the

continuance of it may soon produce death. Have you leanness of soul, because the spiritual pastures are not sufficiently rich and nourishing? Or have you leanness of soul, because you are wanting in the appetite to partake of the provision of the means? Here is the wine of the kingdom; but do you thirst for it, as the hart for the water brooks? Here is the manna of heaven, but do you hunger for it as the man that is starving for want of food? Or is this leanness a judgment from the Lord, as that which the Psalmist says He sent upon the Israelites? They "lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their souls." They lusted after flesh to eat, and God allowed them to have what they clamoured for; and as the result the soul suffered. They fed the body, but the soul-starved; the flesh was pampered, but the spirit pined. It may be well for you to inquire, whether your soul-leanness has not been brought about by a similar cause. Perhaps there has been some special worldly object upon which you have fixed your mind. You have thought of it much; you have placed your best affections upon it; you have laboured hard to obtain it; you seemed determined to have it at any price; although it was not agreeable to the will of God and the interests of your religion. The Lord saw your deep resolve to have this object. He has permitted you to realise it. But the means which you employed to attain it, with the influence of the thing itself, have brought this leanness of which you complain. It is a mercy that you feel your state. If, then, the real cause has been found by you, it behoves you at once to remove it; and then the free use of the "green pastures" which God has provided, shall soon restore you to that flourishing state of grace which it is your high privilege to enjoy.

"HE RESTORETH MY SOUL: HE LEADETH ME IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE."—Ps. xxiii, 3.

PRAYING IN SPIRIT.

I need not leave the jostling world,
Or wait till daily tasks are o'er,
To fold my palms in secret prayer,
Within the close-shut closet door.

There is a viewless cloistered room,
As high as heaven, as fair as day ;
Where, though my *feet* may join the throng,
My *soul* can enter in, and pray.

When I have banished wayward thoughts,
Of sinful works the fruitful seed,—
When folly wins my ear no more,
The closet door is shut, indeed !

No human step approaching, breaks
The blissful stillness of the place ;
No shadow steals across the light
That falls from my Redeemer's face.

And never, through those crystal walls,
The clash of life can pierce its way ;
Nor ever can a human ear
Drink in the spirit words I say.

One hearkening, even, cannot know
When I have crossed the threshold o'er,
For He alone, who hears my prayer,
Has heard the shutting of the door.

H. M. Kimball.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

(Thirty-third Meeting.)

LOVE TO THE HOUSE OF GOD.

We cannot possibly love God and His people, without loving His house,—the place which is made sacred and blessed, not by the presence of man, ornaments, ceremonies, prayers, singing, or any thing human,—but sacred and blessed by the indwelling and manifestation of Jehovah-Jesus, through the Word read and preached, the prayers offered, the hymns sung, the silent, humble, believing, waiting of the heart before Him. A love to the house of God in this sense, will not easily be quenched. It will surmount many difficulties, and conquer what are impossibilities to a love that rests upon any other basis.

It is strong evidence of love to God's house when a man can say, "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up unto the house of the Lord." "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth."

When a man can boldly beg to be excused from company which he respects, and which may yield some worldly gain ;—when he can deny himself of some earthly innocent enjoyments ;—when he can take up his cross in business ;—when he can go against his own pecuniary interests, with the reproaches and cold looks of those in high-life ;—when a man despite these, and such like things, will go to the house of God, to meet Him and His people, it leaves no doubt as to the nature of his love to it.

An officer in the navy, some years ago, of the name of Sparshalt, was so remarkable for his love to the house of God, that he was never known to be absent from his own place of

worship but once, during his whole religious career; and though at times he was so afflicted with deafness that he could not hear a word, he nevertheless continued to fill his place in the sanctuary. When he could not hear, he would meditate upon the hymn sung, and the Scriptures which were read; and in the time of prayer, he prayed for himself; and during sermon he would get a friend to show him the text, and would engage his mind in reflection upon it. In this way he derived much good from waiting before the Lord in His temple.

THE UTMOST SALVATION.

The salvation provided for man in the Gospel is not partial, but entire; not for a time, but for evermore.

It is a "*feast of fat things*," to satisfy his deepest hunger; a *river* of water of life, to quench his intensest thirst; a *clothing*, to hide all his nakedness; a redemption from *all* iniquity; a sanctification of body, soul, and spirit: holiness as God is holy; perfection as God is perfect; a participation of His nature; "the fulness of God."

Such are some of the phrases employed to exhibit the utmost salvation, as provided for, and offered to man, in the Gospel.

But if the Gospel salvation can thus save a man to the utmost, can it not *keep* him in this salvation? If it could not, it would be an imperfect system. Hence, it is a salvation to the utmost in the sense of *evermore*. It not only lifts him from the mire and clay, and puts his feet upon the rock, but *establishes* his goings. It not only sanctifies him entirely, but *preserves* him blameless until the coming of Christ. It not only gives him the spirit of rejoicing, but exhorts him to "rejoice *evermore*." It not only requires thanks in part, but claims thanks in "*everything*."

Evermore; this is the only limit to the duration of the entire salvation of the Gospel. Beyond this fleeting moment and all the fleeting moments which make up the life of man; beyond the age of earth, of moon, of sun, and all the starry heavens; beyond the lapse of trillions of centuries, this

salvation shall maintain its life, its power, and its glories, with all the freshness of its first possession; nay, with a lustre of purity and a brilliancy of glory increased in proportion to the ages of its existence. O what a salvation!

Whence comes this salvation? From CHRIST. He is able to save thus to the uttermost. And how is it that Christ is able to save to the uttermost? Because He ever liveth to make intercession. And who are they whom Christ thus saves? Them that come to God by Him (Heb. vii, 25).

EMINENT PIETY.

Let us not abide in the lowlands of Christian experience; but seek the high and lofty regions of exemplary holiness. There is no Divine barrier to prevent, and every barrier of a human and earthly nature, God is ready to help us to destroy. On the wings of faith and love, with the indwelling Spirit, we may rise into heavenly places with Christ Jesus, where thousands of those sat who are now before the throne in white robes and palms in their hands.

John Eliot was a noble example of eminent piety. Such was his piety that, like another Moses, he had upon his face a continual shine, arising from his uninterrupted communion with the Father of spirits. He was a living sacrifice to God, in earnest prayer, in regular fasting, in unquenchable zeal, in incessant labours, in burning holiness, in having all he was and all he did bound to the altar of the Cross.

Let us thank God for the great multitude of saints, distinguished for piety, which, as a glorious tract of stars, shine in the firmament of the Church of Christ in all ages. If we cannot equal them, let us be *followers* of them in all the Christ-like tempers and actions of their lives. As a cloud of witnesses, with Jesus at their head, they encompass us, not only as spectators of our conduct, but as *examples*. A noble ambition ought always to be prompting us to the imitation of them so far as they exhibit the character of the adorable Redeemer, that we with them may ultimately "inherit the promises."

"Our glorious Leader claims our praise
For His own pattern given ;
While the long cloud of witnesses
Show the same path to heaven."

SEVERE CHASTISEMENTS.

You think that God is dealing with you as He does not deal with others ; giving you a bitterer cup to drink ; laying a heavier burden upon you ; smiting you with a severer stroke. Perhaps it is only unbelief that takes this view of the dealings of God with you. In order truthfully to say that He is severer with you than others, do you not need to *know* everything which others have to endure ? Do you lay claim to such knowledge ? Go and converse with others concerning their chastisements from God, and you will find that they think the same of theirs as you do of yours.

Suppose that your chastisements are severe, and even severer than those of your fellow-Christians, does not your heavenly Father know that you have need of them ? He does not chastise to give Himself pleasure. He does not give you that draught of bitters that He may rejoice in seeing the distress which the drinking of it gives. He does not lay upon you that burden that He may increase His happiness by seeing you bend and mourn under it. He is not a God of caprice, a God of tyranny, a God of hard-heartedness. Be assured, my brother, He has sound reasons for His conduct. He is doing it in love for your profit, although you may not have eyes of faith sufficiently strong to read this upon the light of His countenance and upon the sympathy of His soul. "When the disease is strong," says Thomas Brooks, "the physic must be strong, or else the cure will never be wrought. God is a wise physician, and He would never give strong medicine if weaker could effect the cure. The more rusty the iron is the oftener we put it into the fire to purify it ; and the more crooked it is, the more blows, and the harder blows, we give to straighten it ; therefore, Christian, if thou hast long

been gathering rust, thou hast no cause to complain if God deal thus with thee."

Learn, then, to endure the chastening of the Lord, convinced that it is from reasons of love, and for objects promotive of your highest well-being. "All the chastening in the world," says Brooks again, "without learning, will never make a man blessed. That man who finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with lessoning, is a happy man."

PURIFICATION OF HOPE.

"Hope," says Edward Polhill, "doth not only assure the good things to come, but disposes us for them. Hope is not an idle dream or notion, but it is an active and lively thing; it doth not merely look to the glory above, but puts the soul into a posture for it. Every one that hath in Him the hope of so great a thing as the seeing the blessed God is, "purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John iii, 3). He knows darkness cannot have communion with light: unclean eyes cannot be opened in so pure a place as heaven is; the earthly heart is too gross to be in the region of holy spirits; he that drowns himself in sensual pleasures is not meet to drink of the pure rivers that are above. Malicious spirits cannot be capable of dwelling there, where infinite love opens itself in all its sweetness. The false-hearted hypocrite can never be admitted to see truth in the original, nor the evil man to see goodness at the fountain-head. He, therefore, that hath a right hope of being with God in heaven, will purify himself for such a high estate; he will labour to have more of the light of faith to fit him for that vision; to have more purity of heart, to make him meet to see the Holy One; to have more of heaven in his affections, to prepare him for that blessed region; to have more spiritual delight here, that he may be capable of entering into the joy of his Lord hereafter; to have his heart more filled with holy love, that he may be in an apt posture for the rich effusions of love in heaven; to have more truth and goodness in his heart, that he may be the more ready to

enjoy the fountain and fulness of both; I mean the blessed God, who is all in all. Thus, this lively hope makes a man meet for heaven, and in so doing it makes him meet for those sufferings that lie in the way thither. That purity which disposes him to enjoy God in heaven, doth also dispose him to suffer for Him on earth; and the greater the disposition is to heaven, the centre of blessedness, the stronger will the motion be to break through all difficulties that are in the passage thereunto. Let us, therefore, get a purifying hope, that we may be fit for the cross and the crown."

UNBELIEF.

Unbelief is an accursed evil, and should be mourned over by every one who is in any degree the subject of it. To point out its evil, with a view to excite your hatred of it, and your endeavours to cast it from you, I will direct your attention to several instances of its effects, from the Scriptures.

Unbelief hardens the heart against means which are intended to do it good. God sent His prophets unto Israel to warn and teach them. "Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God" (2 Kings xvii, 14).

Unbelief is the cause of instability. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (Is. vii, 9).

Unbelief rejects the messengers of God. "John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not" (Mat. xxi, 32). "Ye have not His Word abiding in you, for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not" (John v, 38).

Unbelief prevents the Word of God profiting us (Heb. iv, 2).

Unbelief despises miracles (John vii, 27).

It enrages the mind against the truth (Acts xvii, 5).

It perverts the Word of God (John iii, 12, and x, 25).

It disqualifies for prayer (Rom. xi, 4).

It displeases God (Heb. xi, 6).

They who believe not are not Christ's sheep (John x, 26).

They are under Satan (2 Cor. iv, 4). They are condemned already (Mark xiv, 16; John iii, 36). Nothing is pure unto them (Titus i, 15). Christ is restricted in His power to do them good (Matt. xiii, 50).

Unbelief leads to excessive wickedness (1 Tim. i, 13). It led to the rejection of the Jews by God (Rom. xi, 20). It shuts heaven against us (Heb. iv, 11). It casts us down to hell (Luke xii, 46; John iii, 18; 2 Thess. ii, 12).

Here, then, we have an outline of the awful nature of unbelief. Surely to have the least degree of this evil in our hearts ought to make us weep bitterly for it, and pray earnestly that it might be destroyed from within us.

FAITH GIVING AND RECEIVING.

Faith is not only a receiving grace, but a *giving* one. If it receives Christ into the soul, it gives the soul back again to Him. If it receives the truth and the truth makes free, it employs truth and freedom for the glory of Him from whom it received the truth. If it receives strength from God, it uses that strength in ways which promote His honour among men. In a word, whatever it receives it puts it out to use, that it may yield due praise to Him who is the gracious Giver.

A PRESENT HEAVEN.

We do well to meditate on heaven in all the lovely and glorious features in which it is revealed to us in the Scriptures; but let us take care lest we be so occupied with thoughts of a *future* heaven and longings after it that we forget our privilege to have a heaven opened within us on earth. Let us labour to have the beginning of eternal holiness and bliss brought into us now; to be *instated* into as much of our inheritance as we can in our years of minority. Why should we wait till death before we enter upon heaven? Does the sensual man tarry till the future? Is he not intent upon his enjoyment now? Can any ambitious man be at ease, waiting till preferments come upon him from the years beyond? Does he not labour to obtain

them now ? Is there any reason why we should be satisfied by simply looking to a *future* heaven ? Our faith in its life and power ought to rise and bring down God into the soul as sensibly as if it was actually among the angels ; not of course in the degree, but in the fact. "The truth is," says Samuel Shaw, "heaven is a state of perfect communion with God, a state of joy, love, peace, purity, and freedom ; and as far as any soul is in such a state upon earth, so far he may be said to be in heaven. Therefore a rightly active soul, that truly understands its proper and spiritual heaven and happiness, cannot be content to stay for all its happiness till the world to come,—cannot be content to be unhappy, no, not for an hour, but is still growing up in God, and springing up into everlasting life" (John iv, 14).

CONTEMPLATION OF THE DEAD.

Although death comes into our circles and takes away those whom we loved, some for their amiability, others for their holiness, others for their sanctified intelligence, and others for their works' sake ; yet he cannot take away the pleasing recollections of our association with them, our endeavours to benefit by the godly examples they have left us, and our contemplation of them in their exalted membership with the church of the first-born in heaven. "We are not only called," says Treffery, jun., "to profit by the example of distinguished saints while they remain on earth, but also to accompany them in spirit to that land of perfection where everything of infirmity and error, where the possibility of lapse and decay is for ever removed. Our faith is invited to listen to their solemn song, and to anticipate their holy joy. As those objects in nature, which, when minutely inspected, are in many respects coarse and unsightly, in the distant landscape are softened into perfect beauty, so are our recollections of the departed faithful to rise on our spirits in fair and unsullied vision. All that was worthy of our esteem here we are to contemplate as now expanded and sublimed ; all that was earthly and questionable

as shaken off for ever. We are to witness their love, woke up the undying and rapturous ardour;—their zeal, enkindled in a pure, untrembling pillar of ascending flame;—their praise, multiplied by the echoes of countless spirits, pure and ethereal as themselves;—their intellects, with unwearied wing, expatiating over eternity, and finding new matter for wonder and adoration in every line of light which radiates from the throne; and then, when our thoughts are ravished with the glorious and pure scenes which present themselves to our faith, we are to kneel before our Father and their Father, and lifting up holy hands and a sincere heart, to breathe forth the comprehensive and mysterious prayer, “Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven.”

A DOUBTING CHRISTIAN.

'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?
If I love, why am I thus?
Why this dull, this lifeless frame?
Hardly, sure, can they be worse,
Who have never heard His name!
Could my heart so hard remain,
Prayer a task and burden prove;
Every trifle give me pain,
If I knew a Saviour's love?
When I turn my eyes within,
All is dark and vain and wild:
Fill'd with unbelief and sin,
Can I deem myself a child?
If I pray or hear or read,
Sin is mixed with all I do;
You that love the Lord indeed,
Tell me, is it thus with you?

Yet I mourn my stubborn will,
Find my sin a grief and thrall :
Should I grieve for what I feel,
If I did not love at all ?
Could I joy His saints to meet,
Choose the ways I once abhorr'd,
Find at times the promise sweet,
If I did not love the Lord ?
Lord, decide the doubtful case !
Thou who art Thy people's sun,
Shine upon thy work of grace,
If it be indeed begun.
Let me love Thee more and more,
If I love at all, I pray ;
If I have not loved before,
Help me to begin to-day.

John Newton.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

(Thirty-fourth Meeting.)

NECESSITY OF AN INWARD CHANGE.

THE great thing at which we should aim is an INWARD REFORMATION. All outward changes in morals, in manners, in circumstances, however good they be in their kind, are of no essential spiritual use to us if the "inner man" retains his old nature of depravity. You may take clay, iron, lead, and other earthly materials, and make them up into very elegant and commendable figures, but still they are tin, lead, iron, or clay. So we may be taken by education, by the law, by the fear of man, by self-interests, and be moulded into moral shapes different to what we had before ; but if the converting grace has not come *within* us, we are still dead "in trespasses and sins." "If adulterate silver," says Cudworth, "that hath

much alloy or dross in it, have never so current a stamp put upon it, yet it will not pass notwithstanding, when the touchstone trieth it. We must be reformed within with a spirit of fire and a spirit of burning, to purge us from the dross and corruption of our hearts, and refine us as gold and silver; and then we shall be reformed truly and not before."

My brother, let this be the change you shall desire and seek, if as yet it has not been wrought within you. It comes from above; then do not look for it in any earthly source. It comes from above through Christ; then do not expect it by virtue of anything in yourself or any other finite being. It comes from above through Christ, in the agency of the Holy Spirit; then do not depend upon any ministerial, baptismal, ceremonial, or church agency to accomplish it. Remember, whatever the means may be, conversion—the change of your heart from sin to grace—is from God, as the source, through Christ as the Medium, by the Holy Ghost as the Agent. The Source, the Medium, the Agent, are now nigh unto you, ready to effect the change. *In the exercise of your free will, with a sense of deep necessity, just as you are, give up your heart this moment to the Triune Power of love, mercy, and grace, and the inward change shall be accomplished.*

THE ABILITY OF CHRIST TO SAVE.

We must not think that Christ is able to save us because He possesses a power which created all things, which preserves all things; a power which wrought great miracles in His earthly lifetime. He might be proprietor of all this power, and not have ability to save us. His ability to save us arises out of HIS SACRIFICIAL DEATH AND HIS EVER PREVALENT INTERCESSION. Since He has died and risen and gone into the presence of God as the Lamb slain, the power which before could only have created or destroyed, can now save; can accomplish such moral changes in man's nature, and in the moral world, of which the changes wrought in the physical world by His power were, and are, glorious symbols.

O yes, thou penitent soul, fix thy eye of faith on Jesus as able to save thee, because He has died for thee, and now lives to make intercession for thee in heaven.

Strange as the statement may seem at first, it is nevertheless solemnly true, *there is a restriction, a limitation, in the ability of Christ to save.* HE SAVES THEM, AND THEM ONLY, THAT COME TO GOD BY HIM. Though Christ might be able to throw off worlds from his hands like the dew-drops of the morning, He could not save a single soul but what came in the appointed way. All that close their eyes upon Him; all that seek God in any other way; all that endeavour to get to heaven through any other medium, whatever might be their religious state now before God, and their doom at the last, *Christ does not save them.* If they will not have Christ, Christ's power to save them is bound; but His power to destroy them is free. On the other hand, all that come to God by Him, His power is free to save them, and His power to destroy them is bound. "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER BUT BY ME." *O how, how shall the man be saved who is not saved by Christ?*

SEEKING GOD.

It is as much a fact that God is to be found by us, as that we have lost Him.

Are you seeking God with your heart? Then He says, "If thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him; IF THOU SEEK HIM WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL" (Dent. iv, 20).

If you are seeking God *He will not forsake you*: "Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee" (Ps. ix, 10).

If you are seeking God, *you shall find spiritual life*: "Your heart shall live, that seek God" (Ps. lxix, 32): "Seek ye Me, and ye shall live" (Amos v, 4).

If you are seeking God *you shall obtain His blessing*: "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain" (Is. xlv, 19). "Seek ye the Lord until He come and rain righteous-

ness upon you" (Hos. x, 12). "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him; unto the soul that seeketh Him" (Lam. iii, 25). "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him" (Ezra viii, 32). "He is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. xi, 6).

MUCH IN PRAYER.

The psalmist said, "I give myself unto prayer." The Saviour spake a parable unto this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint. St. Paul exhorts us to "pray without ceasing." "Praying always, with all prayer," is one part of the Christian armour. It is said of the Rev. Mr. Blackerby, "He was much in prayer; much in closet prayer; much in walking prayer; much in conjugal prayer, for he prayed with his wife alone; much in family prayer, daily with his own family, and almost daily with some other family. He used to ride about from family to family, and only alight and pray with them, and give them some heavenly exhortation, and then went away to some other family. Also he was very much in fasting and prayer."

HAPPINESS IN OBEDIENCE.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." How true is the doctrine involved in these words, viz., that happiness flows out of obedience. Ask the angels whether it is not so; ask the child in the family; the servant in the household. Could the whole creation speak in as many voices as it possesses distinct parts, it would confirm the doctrine.

The *knowledge* of God's will in itself, gives no happiness to the inhabitants of heaven, but the *practice* of that knowledge does. The knowledge of God's will in hell yields no pleasure; but rebellion against it gives ineffable misery. I might take you into schools of art and halls of legislature; into mansions of wealth and palaces of royalty, where the knowledge of right is possessed, but the practice of *wrong* is followed; and though from the appearances you would judge no happiness was

wanting, perhaps not of an external kind; yet in the kingdom of the soul there is distress and misery, because in rebellion against the Divine will. Whereas I could remind you of forlorn and persecuted apostles; I could take you to a poor cottage in wilderness solitude, where, to all appearance, all was misery, but where, in *reality*, all was happiness; and whence sprang this stream in the desert, and this light in the darkness? Observe, it came out of the life of obedience to God, according to the knowledge possessed.

How much of human misery is occasioned by living contrary to knowledge! The great bulk of unhappiness among Christians arises from the same cause. My brother, would you attain to happiness? Do as you know. Be more desirous of practising what you know, than acquiring more knowledge to remain unpractised. The happiness of obedience will be an inward, a substantial, an abiding happiness; a happiness which shall surpass the happiness of intelligence, however extensive; of wealth, however vast; of worldly pleasures, however various; of fame, however far extended. It is in its nature, the happiness of God and of angels.

AFFLICTION NO PROOF OF GOD'S DISPLEASURE.

"God will not lay on you one stroke more than you are able to bear," said a visitor to a dear child of the Father whom she was glorifying in the fire of sickness and trial.

She replied, "I do not feel as if God were *beating* me. He was not *angry* when He allowed the Israelitish youths to be cast into the fiery furnace."

The bonds and imprisonment of Paul were no marks of displeasure from the Lord. The "chosen vessel" was honoured by suffering great things for the name of Him he went forth to preach. Paul and Silas were not cast into prison for their own sins, but for the salvation of the warder of the prison. And surely when he was a solitary prisoner, and prayer moved the hinge of the iron gate, Peter could not look back to the

day when he was delivered into the hands of four quaternions of soldiers as a punishment for sin!

If a loving father, conscious of the undeveloped power of his son, gives him what appears to the ignorant a cruel task to study, it is not so to the son; he has learned enough to be sure such teaching is needful for the future career for which his father designs him. For its acquisition, he must necessarily forego many a mountain ramble, and many a twilight wandering, yet he knows no good thing has his father withheld from him; and that problem to be solved, and this language to be learned in a strange land, are among the *all* things that work together for good to them that love Him.

HOW TO FIND CONTENTMENT.

"When the mind and the condition meet, there is contentment," says Philip Henry. "Now in order to that, either the condition must be brought up to the mind, and that is not only unreasonable but impossible, for as the condition riseth, the mind riseth with it; or else the mind must be brought down to the condition, and that is both possible and reasonable. No condition of life will of itself make a man content, without the grace of God; for we find *Haman* discontented in the court, *Ahab* discontented on the throne, *Adam* discontented in Paradise, nay (and higher we cannot go), the angels discontented in heaven itself."

HOLY CONVERSATION.

It is said of John Eliot, the Missionary, that in serious and pious discourses his tongue was "like the pen of a ready writer." He was sufficiently affable, but he had a remarkable gravity mixed with it, and a singular aptitude to raise something spiritual out of every subject of conversation. He imposed it upon himself as a general rule, that he would leave something of God, and heaven, and religion, with all that should come near him; so that in all places his company was attended with majesty and reverence, and it was no sooner

proper for him to speak, but, like *Mary's* opened box of ointment, he filled the whole room with the perfumes of the graces of his lips. "His conferences were like those which *Tertullian* affirms to have been common among the saints in his days, as knowing that the ear of God was open to them all; and he managed his rudder so as to manifest that he was bound heavenward in his whole communication. As the friend of the famous *Ursin* could profess, that he never went unto him without coming away either the wiser or the better for him; so it is an acknowledgment which more than one friend of Mr. Eliot's has made concerning him, 'I never was with him but I got some good from him.' "

• USE THE GRACE YOU HAVE.

It is by the use of the grace you have that you will acquire more grace; as by the use of the life it now has the child increases in life and strength; as by the use of the money he possesses, the merchant enlarges his property. God does not give grace to lie inactive, but to be used. Where it is given and *not* used, the supply is stopped, and that which has been received is taken away. Man does not ordinarily give to his fellow, when he knows that former gifts have not been appreciated and used. A wise father does not bestow upon his son larger favours or even a continuance of them, when the former ones have been appropriated contrary to his wish. The universal principle upon which gifts are bestowed is, "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not (that thinks he has nothing, and therefore excuses himself from practice) shall be taken away that which he hath" (Matt. xxv, 29).

My brother, would you like to lose the grace you already have, small as it may be? I know you would not. The very thought of God taking it from you, and leaving you to yourself, is fearful to you. But do you not hear what the Saviour says? O then, awake to concern! Give yourself to action. Do not spend your days in mourning your littleness of love,

and smallness of grace ; but as every economical, industrious, and enterprising man of the world would do, *use what you have, and that shall gain more.* One pound will soon gain another, if wisely used ; two five ; and five ten. What a mighty harvest is it possible to raise from *one grain* ! The broad daylight of the heavens arises from the faint streaks of the morning, *continuing to shine.* The grandest river which empties itself in the ocean, became such by flowing on as the little rill, gathering as it flowed. The wealthiest men of the world became such by the employment of such means as they had in constancy and perseverance. Ask the holiest saint on earth, or the brightest spirit in heaven, how he became such ? The answer will be,—BY THE USE OF THE GRACE I HAD IN EVERY STAGE OF MY JOURNEY.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE A CONFLICT.

I doubt not but every one who has really entered into the Christian life finds it to be a conflict. It is a conflict with sin, with self, with circumstances, with error, with doubts, with Satan, with the world. The conflict may sometimes go hard with you : it may seem as though you are left alone to fight with your hosts of adversaries ; as though Apollyon had his foot upon you, and hell was about to shout victory. In this extremity of the warfare do not be discouraged : hold fast to the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit : keep the whole armour on and look to your Captain, and you shall rise from the contest more than conqueror. In the time of your fear trust in Him. He will come to your help and arm you afresh for the struggle. He will maintain your right against the usurper. Amidst all the tremblings of your soul, and the horrible spectres of the shadow of death, catch the falling accents of your Captain's lips, "My grace is sufficient for thee." You may come out of the conflict with wounds and scars, bearing the marks of many hard-fought battles, with the sword not resting in the scabbard, covered with the dust of the battle-field ; but the King himself shall give you a welcome

to His own palace and throne, where no foe shall again assault; where no fear shall again disturb; where no heart shall again deceive; where no armour shall again be required. You shall rest from your conflicts, and reign as king and priest unto God for ever and ever.

“Now let my soul arise,
And tread the tempter down :
My Captain leads me forth
To conquest and a crown :
March on, nor fear to win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way.”

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

Oh! eyes that are weary, and hearts that are sore,
Look off unto Jesus, and sorrow no more.
The light of His countenance shineth so bright,
That on earth, as in heaven, there need be “no night.”

Looking off unto Jesus, my eyes cannot see
The troubles and dangers that throng about me.
They cannot be blinded with sorrowful tears—
They cannot be shadowed with unbelief fears.

Looking off unto Jesus, my spirit is blest ;
In the world I have turmoil, in Him I have rest.
The sea of my life all about me may roar,
When I look unto Jesus, I hear it no more.

Looking off unto Jesus, I go not astray ;
My eyes are upon Him, and He shows me the way.
The path may seem dark as He leads me along,
But following Jesus I *cannot* go wrong.

Looking off unto Jesus, oh! may I be found,
When the waters of Jordan encompass me round ;
Let them bear me away in His presence to be ;
’Tis but seeing Him nearer, whom always I see.

Then, then I shall know the full beauty and grace
Of Jesus, my Lord, when I stand face to face.
I shall know how His love went before me each day,
And wonder that *ever* my eyes turned away.—*Anon.*

CHAPTER XXXV.

(*Thirty-fifth Meeting.*)

KNOWLEDGE BY PRACTICE.

THOSE things in religion which are profound mysteries to the world, are easily understood by God's people; not because they are more educated, more sagacious, more naturally endowed with penetrating powers of mind, but because they *do* His will. This accords with the Saviour's teachings: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine," at which others stumble; by which they are confounded both in their reasoning and their experience. How can these things be? is the question of surprise which they propose.

To practise repentance is the most effectual way to know what it is; to believe in Jesus is the means of arriving at the knowledge of Him; to be born again from above will unravel all the mysteries of that question. He who has been adopted into the Divine family, and received the witness of the Spirit, knows the nature and blessedness of these privileges. The will of God, done in these and all other points of Christian experience and practice, will secure a knowledge of them more deep, valuable, and enduring, than any other means which may be used.

The astronomer may study his books, but it is the *use* of the telescope in the study of the heavens themselves, which gives him the best knowledge of astronomy. The tradesman may study a system of trade from books, but the *practice*

gives him more and better knowledge than books. So a man may study the Bible and hear sermons ; and the whole range of doctrinal truths, after all, may be as unknown to him as the new birth to Nicodemus, or Christ's preaching to the Jews ; but the *practice* of the things he reads and hears, shall bring a clearness, fulness, and power of light upon them to his experience, which never shone upon them in the theory only.

An eminent French infidel once observed to Pascal, "If I had your principles I would be a better man ;" to whom Pascal replied, "Begin with being a better man, and you will soon have my principles." Here is the secret of Christian knowledge. Live as Christians should live, and you will acquire a knowledge which none but Christians can possess.

FAITH IN SELF AND IN THE SAVIOUR.

Have faith in self as possessing the power to believe, the same as you possess power to see when the light shines, or hear when you are spoken to, or feel when you are smitten, or taste when you eat. If you have not this faith in self, you may remain as a paralysed man believing in self in another way, viz., that you have no power, and therefore will make no effort.

"But is not faith the gift of God?" Certainly. The same as the gift of seeing, hearing, tasting, and feeling. And as God has given you *these* to exercise, and you believe He has, and exercise them ; so has He given you *that*, and you ought to believe He has, and exercise it to the best of your ability.

It is an error into which many fall, that faith is something which must be poured down upon us from above, or imparted to us in some form, by some external agency. How reasons the apostle? "What saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart ; that is, the word of faith, which we preach ; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe IN THINE HEART that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For

WITH THE HEART man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 8—10). Thus the apostle shows that you have faith in the heart as you have sight in the eye, and all you have to do is to fix it upon the Saviour in the light of the Spirit, and "thou shalt be saved."

It is necessary that you have faith in self in the above sense in order to have faith in the Saviour. While you wait for faith to come in some extraordinary manner, you will never receive the Lord Jesus. More than this, you will increase the belief that you have no power to exercise faith in Jesus, and so make salvation more difficult on your part. *Believe that God has and DOES give you the power to exercise faith in the Saviour ; use that power now, and be saved according to His word,—“ He that believeth shall be saved.”*

INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

The indwelling of the Holy Ghost in Christians is as much a fact as the existence of both.

He dwells in Christians as a temple :—"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God" (1 Cor. vi. 19).

He dwells in Christians to quicken them :—"But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii, 11.)

He dwells in Christians to teach them :—"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John xiv, 26).

He dwells in Christians to guide them :—"When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth" (John xvi, 13). "If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Gal. v, 18).

He dwells in Christians as the Comforter :—"I will pray the

Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth" (John xiv, 16, 17).

He dwells in Christians as the Witnesser:—"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii, 16).

He dwells in Christians as their Helper:—"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" (Rom. viii, 26).

The indwelling of the Spirit is an evidence that we are Christ's:—"Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Rom. viii, 9).

It is an evidence of our union and communion with God:—"Hereby we know that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1 John iv, 13). "And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John iii, 24).

It is an evidence of our sonship with God:—"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv, 6).

"HAVE YE RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST SINCE YE BELIEVED?"

CHARITY.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth, but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. . . . And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. xiii).

HAPPINESS IN GOD.

"Christians might avoid much trouble and inconvenience," says Dr. Payson, "if they would only believe what they profess—that God is able to make them happy without anything else. They imagine if such a dear friend were to die, or such and such blessings to be removed, they should be miserable; whereas God can make them a thousand times happier without them. To mention my own case,—God has been depriving me of one blessing after another; but as every one was removed, He has come in and filled up its place; and now when I am a cripple, and not able to move, I am happier than ever I was in my life before, or ever expected to be; and if I had believed this twenty years ago, I might have been spared much anxiety."

THE LORD A REFUGE.

Mrs. Winslow, in writing to her son, says: "I wrote you that I have had for several days a sore conflict, greatly tried by sin within, and by cross-providences without. I was in a storm, and had no more power to guide it than an infant conflicting with a giant. I went to my stronghold again and again. I felt that Christ could do it. I lay prostrate at His feet, pleading the promises as fast as the Holy Ghost brought them to me. In a short time afterwards I was placed just in that position that was the most trying; but all was calm, peace, and quietness. It was the Lord. Oh, how grateful I felt! I retired to my room to thank the Lord for His goodness. He tried my faith, and at last brought me down powerless at His feet, who has said, *All power is mine in heaven and on earth*. By these things we are taught experimentally

wherein our great strength lies. Mere head knowledge will do no good. The Lord is the helper of His people, and there is no other. Thus the Holy Ghost works in the souls of the redeemed. Precious Jesus! Thou art that friend that sticketh closer than a brother, or the tenderest and dearest object on earth. I was led this morning to reason with the Lord in His own words, *Without Me ye can do nothing*. If you have ever beheld a vessel in a fearful storm followed by a sudden calm, you can fancy my situation. The Lord be praised for His goodness. My soul desires to give Him the glory."

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee:
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is stay'd;
All my help from Thee I bring:
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

Not for our sakes does God grant us any favour. There is nothing in us to constitute a reason why He should, unless it is our sin, want, and misery. He deals with us as David did with Mephibosheth. When he had obtained victory over the Philistines he called Ziba unto him, and asked whether there were not yet any man left of the house of Saul, that he might do kindness to for Jonathan's sake. He was told that there was Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth came into the presence of the king, a poor, lame, impotent man, and casting himself on his face, spake of himself as a "dead dog," unworthy any notice from him. But the king spoke to him, and said, "Fear not, for I will show thee kindness for Jonathan's sake."

Thus it is with God in His kindness to us. For the Saviour's sake He saves us. Art thou cast out from thy brethren, and like Joseph lying in the pit of forlornness? look up to God;

for the sake of Jesus He will deliver thee. Art thou like Mephibosheth, humbling thyself in thy poverty, weakness, and meanness before God? Fear not, thou hast a Jonathan in heaven, infinitely dear and precious to Him. For His sake He will show thee kindness. He will take thee into His presence; thou shalt sit at His table; eat of His dainties; live in His smiles; be protected by His power; and have provision made for thee as long as immortality shall last.

David's and Jonathan's hearts were knit together; and David loved Jonathan as his own soul. There was a tie of nature which linked Mephibosheth to Jonathan; and it was because of this link, and this love, that David dealt so kindly. God and Christ are one with a unity infinitely closer than theirs. God loves His Son as He loves Himself. We are bound to Christ in His humanity; and it is with the eyes and heart of His love to Christ through this tie of humanity, that He loves us and shows us any kindness. Blessed be His name!

FIDELITY IN TRIAL.

In writing to John Kennedy, who was suffering for Christ, Samuel Rutherford says, "Ye contracted with Christ, I hope, when first ye began to follow Him, that ye would bear His cross. Fulfil your part of the contract with patience, and break not to Jesus Christ. Be honest, brother, in your bargaining with Him: for who knoweth better how to bring up children than our God? For (to lay aside His knowledge, of the which there is no finding out) He hath been practised in bringing up His heirs these five thousand years, and His bairns are all well brought up, and many of them are honest men now at home, up in their own house in heaven, and are entered heirs to their Father's inheritance. Now, the form of his bringing up was by chastisements, scourging, correcting, nurturing; and see if He maketh any exception of any of His bairns (Rev. iii, 19; Heb. xii, 7, 8). No: His eldest Son and His Heir, Jesus, is not excepted" (Heb. ii, 10).

CONVICTION NOT CONDEMNATION.

"Conviction is not condemnation," says one. How important for us to bear this in mind as children of God! A wilful transgression of the law is sin, and therefore brings condemnation upon the soul; but an endeavour to fulfil the law, accompanied with a failure to do so, may produce conviction that we have failed, but not condemnation. An error deliberately chosen in preference to the truth, is followed by conviction from the truth rejected; and such conviction is condemnation; but an error unintentionally believed though it may be followed with conviction, that conviction is not condemnation. Our Father is not unjust to condemn us in cases where the spirit was right towards Him; and then, besides this, we have a great High Priest, the Son of God, who is touched with our infirmities, who ever lives to make intercession for us, and on whom we can cast all our failings, and He will bear them away. Thus we may learn when to distinguish between conviction and condemnation, and the reasons why at certain times we may be convinced of an evil, and yet not condemned for it by God.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

Christian liberty is a privilege which you, as a believer in Jesus, ought to enjoy. The following are the Scriptural features of it:

It is freedom from the law: "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. vii, 6). "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii, 2).

It is freedom from the curse of the law: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree" (Gal. iii, 13).

It is freedom from the fear of death: "And deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. iii, 15).

It is freedom from sin: "For he that is dead is freed from sin." "Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. vi, 7, 18).

It is freedom from corruption: "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. viii, 21).

It is freedom from the bondage of man: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more" (1 Cor. ix, 19).

Christians are called to this liberty: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. v, 13).

Do you possess this liberty? If so, *praise God for it.* He has loosed your bonds (Ps. cxvi, 16, 17).

Assert it. "Why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?" (1 Cor. x, 29).

Walk in it. "I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy precepts" (Ps. cxix, 45).

Stand fast in it. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. v, 1).

Do not abuse it. "Use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh" (Gal. v, 13). "Not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness" (1 Peter ii, 16).

THE PILGRIM'S LONGING.

Let me go! my feet are weary,
In the desert where I roam;
Let me go! the way is dreary—
Let the wanderer go home!

I am weary of the darkness
Of these lonely, failing streams—
Let me go! where founts are flashing
In the light of Heaven's beams!

Let me go! my heart is fainting
'Neath its weight of sins and fears,
And my wakeful eyes are failing
With these ever-falling tears!
For the morning I am sighing
While I earth's long vigils keep;
Here the loved are ever dying,
And the loving live to weep!

Let me go! Oh! who would linger,
Fainting, fearing, and athirst,
When before us lies a region
Where undying pleasures burst?
Let me go! my soul is springing
For its flight from sin's dark vale,
And would fain its way be winging
Where no storms will e'er assail!

Let me go! but, heavenly Father!
Thou dost hear thine orphans cry!
When around me tempests gather,
Thou dost sit above the sky.
Trusting Thee through Thine Anointed,
I can yet contented roam,
Knowing, in Thine hour appointed,
Thou wilt take the wanderer home.

A. W. B.

CHAPTER XXXVI:

(Thirty-sixth Meeting.)

FEAR NOT.

How comfortable are those two little words, "Fear not," spoken by the father to his child, when in danger, or when expecting his displeasure, or when required to go a way that is dark and lonely! So they are when the monarch speaks them to a subject of his realm, fearing his frown, or commanded to a responsible and dangerous undertaking.

Are not the words equally comfortable as they are spoken by God, our Father in heaven, and Sovereign on the throne, to His children on earth? They ought to be. O yes, believing soul, you should take fresh courage, and gird up your loins anew, as you hear Him speaking unto you in the sweetest tones of affection, "Fear not." Surely if He commands you not to fear, you may cease at once, and feel that the everlasting arms which encompass heaven, encircle you.

Are you fighting with your enemies? He says, "Fear not, I am thy shield" (Gen. xv, 1).

Are you encompassed with dangers, as was Israel at the Red Sea, and do you see no way of escape? "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of God."

Are you like Elisha's servant as he saw the Syrian army coming to seize him and his master? "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that are with them" (2 Kings vi, 16).

Do you feel your own weakness and fear you shall fall? "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa. xli, 10).

Do you ever think you shall not get to heaven? "Fear

not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii, 32).

Oh, how many are the "*Fear nots*" which God speaks to His people. Shall He speak them in vain? Take them, thou trembling one, take them; put them together, and make a string of heavenly pearls of them. Hang them about thy neck, and ever look at them for comfort. Take them, and draw from them such Divine confidence as shall make you strong, fearless, victorious.

A MAN OF PRAYER.

To be a man of prayer is to be a man that gives himself to it, the same as a man is said to be a man of business who devotes himself mainly and purposely unto it. To be a man of prayer is to have the spirit of prayer constantly dwelling in the heart; to live in the atmosphere of prayer: not so much to have the set times and forms, though this may be done, as to have a praying frame of mind in all and with all that he has to do, so that it may be said he is a *praying* man—not a man that has, or does, or will pray; but one to whom prayer gives a present definite character, the same as life; so that as you may say he is a *living* man, you may say that he is a *praying* man.

It is said of John Eliot, the apostle to the Indians, "He kept his heart in a frame of prayer with a marvellous constancy, and was continually provoking all that were about him thereunto. When he heard any considerable news, his usual and speedy reflection thereupon would be, 'Brethren, let us turn all this into prayer;' and he was perpetually inviting prayer, both more privately in the meetings, and more publicly in the churches of his neighbourhood. When he came to a house that he was intimately acquainted with, he would often say, 'Come, let us not have a visit without a prayer; let us pray down the blessing of heaven upon your family before we go.' His whole breath seemed in a sort made up of ejaculatory prayers, many scores of which winged messengers he despatched away to heaven every day. By them he bespoke

blessings upon almost every person or affair that he was concerned with ; and he carried everything to God with some pertinent Hosannas or Hallelujahs over it. He was a mighty and a happy man that had his quiver full of these heavenly arrows ; and when he was never so straitly besieged by human occurrences, yet he fastened the wishes of his devout soul unto them, and shot them up to heaven over the head of all."

TEMPTATION.

Temptation is the lot of all Christ's people, as it was the lot of Christ Himself. We should not wonder if in this the servant is as his Lord. It is, however, a comfort for us to know that there is no more sin in the simple fact of our being tempted than there was in His. We may, like Him, resist and conquer. There is the same weapon—the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God—for us as for Him ; and if, as He, we overcome by its use, we shall be the more prepared for the coming duties and privileges of life. We shall derive increased strength, deeper peace, higher joy ; and secure the blessing of the man who endures temptation.

LIVING TO GOD.

You desire to live to God. This you may do. He brings Himself nigh unto you in those names, relations, attributes, and works, which are calculated to attract your confidence. He has given you certain faculties and affections, by which you may know Him and become attached to Him. If you have presented yourself a living sacrifice unto Him, holy and acceptable ; if you have placed your desires upon Him ; set your love upon him, received Him into your heart as your sovereign Ruler, and entertained Him in your thoughts ; if you are walking with Him as Enoch did, or before Him as David did, you are living to Him. And oh, what an honour is this ! what a blessedness is this ! And what a future it opens before you after death !—

"Sure, if to God on earth we live,
To LIVE WITH HIM IN HEAVEN."

"NONE BUT CHRIST, NONE BUT CHRIST."

Such was the triumphant language of one of the faithful witnesses of Jesus, as he passed away to heaven in the fires of martyrdom. Such was the sentiment of Peter when he said, "To whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life." Such was the exclusive experience of Paul, as expressed in, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and in parallel passages. Such was the testimony of Wesley in life and death. In life—

"None but Christ to me be given,
None but Christ in earth or heaven."

And in death—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

Such has been the experience of millions of God's saints, who have walked this sorrowful vale; and it is none the less full of Christ now that they have entered into the land of unspeakable joys.

Can *we* find any one for our choice better than Jesus? Does not He possess pre-eminence in the universe? Then why should we be satisfied with any beneath Him, when we may have Him as readily, and more so, than any one inferior?

Are we lost? Then let us say, None but Christ for us as a Saviour. Are we unholy? None but Christ, in His blood, and Spirit, and Word, to sanctify us. Are we naked? None but Christ, as our righteousness, to clothe us. Are we hungry? None but Christ, as the Bread of Life, to feed us. Are we dying? None but Christ, as our Resurrection and Life, to deliver us from corruption. Oh what, what do we need as sinners exposed to hell, and yet as sinners capable of heaven? All, all, is in Christ. In Him, as it is not in the whole universe besides. Then if Christ is offered on the one hand, and the whole universe on the other, we shall show our wisdom and promote our interests by taking Christ. Let us be so enamoured

with His love, enraptured with His praises, entranced with His excellencies, and ravished with His beauties, that the one song of our lips, and the one experience of our hearts, shall be in life, death, and for ever, "NONE BUT CHRIST, NONE BUT CHRIST."

VICTORY OVER DEATH.

It is your wish to have victory over death. You may, brother, realise most blessedly the object of your desire. If you obtain victory over sin, death will be as harmless as a serpent which has lost its sting. "The sting of death is sin;" not sin existing in death itself, but sin existing in us. Yes; it is we ourselves that give to death a *sting*, a terrible power, a ghastly influence, if he have any. Sin pardoned, subdued, eradicated from our nature, unarmours death, and equips us. We are the conquerors, and he is the conquered. He may possibly, to some Christian minds, under certain circumstances, have a formidable aspect; but he can do no more than a spectral appearance might—produce a little tremor or temporary dismay.

But where, O where, is sin to meet with its victor? "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." You are to be the victor, through Jesus Christ. Mark, St. Paul does not say, who *shall* give us the victory, but who *giveth* us. It is a victory we daily enjoy; so that fear of death, dread of death, we have none. Through Jesus Christ we have a daily victory over doubt, slavish fear, sin and Satan, and *therefore* death; so that we can say, For us to live is Christ, and to die is gain. "For we know if this, the earthly house of our tabernacle, were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Here, then, is the *true* victory over death,—*victory in every day life over sin*. All other victory over death is deceitful and ruinous,—a victory followed by a tremendous defeat,—a victory over the dark waters, but an everlasting repulse from the

entrance into the city. This is a victory, followed by an abundant entrance ministered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“Jesus, in Thy great name I go,
To conquer death, my final foe!
And when I quit this cumbrous clay,
And soar on angels' wings away,
My soul the second death defies,
And reigns eternal in the skies.”

THE PROMISES NO GROUND FOR INDIFFERENCE.

If we think that because God has given us “exceeding great and precious promises,” and “He is faithful that hath promised,” *therefore* we need not be much concerned about the blessings of religion,—we are committing a mistake which will bring upon us swift destruction. Instead of promoting indifference, the promises are intended to quicken and move us to the utmost earnestness. They would fain have us as earnest as the blessings promised are important. What is the general object for which promises are given among men? Is it not to excite diligence and encourage labour? What does God promise pardon to the penitent for?—that he may be quickened to hope for it and to seek it. Upon the same principle He promises grace in the time of need, deliverance from trouble, holiness, victory over Satan, and finally, heaven to crown the whole. The penny was not given to the idler in the market-place, but to the *labourer* in the vineyard. Salvation, which is promised, does not come to the careless, but to the penitent, believing seekers. ‘Would you call the promises “wells of salvation?” then to drink of their refreshing waters you must draw. Would you call them “*fields*” to yield fruit? then you must *dig* if you would reap a harvest from them. Are they “*mines*” of wealth? then you must *search* to obtain the treasures. Are they “*flowers of Paradise*?” then you must pluck them, to have them as yours, and to be comforted with their fragrance.

"It is a wrong done to the promises of the Gospel," says one, "by carnal libertines, who make use only of them to countenance their sloth, and not to quicken their obedience. No man can rationally conclude, that because the promises of God are the declarations of His unchangeable purpose and will, therefore duties and endeavours are superfluous to the effecting of any good which He hath promised to confer upon us."

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

Do not be discouraged, brother, because you know more and more of yourself. Have you not been asking the Lord to examine you, to try your heart and reins, and whatever evil there was in you, to discover it unto you? Your prayer is being answered. Surely this is a matter of gratitude. Now that you are exposed to yourself by God, do not brood over your evils and defects, but at once go to the Blessed Physician who heals all the soul's diseases. The discovery of your evils is not made to discourage or weaken you, but to lead you to desire and seek an entire destruction of them, by the mighty efficacy of the Saviour's blood. Haste, then, haste to this *only remedy*. Go, show thyself to Jesus; and He, with one touch of His blood, shall make thee every whit whole.

THANKFUL FOR SMALL GRACE.

Though you may have but a small measure of grace, for this be thankful. It is from God. It is undeserved. It might have been withheld. It is more than thousands have. It is capable of growth and expansion by use. It has done much for you, and is now doing much for you. Moses, as soon as he had crossed the Red Sea, and stood on the shore, struck up a song of praise to God for deliverance; although the wilderness was before him, and he had just entered into it. He did not wait for more signal displays of Divine power and goodness. For what he had seen of God's salvation he sang a hymn of thanks. If *you* have no more than the grace which has brought you into the ways of God, be thankful. You

shall receive more as you advance. Nay, if your grace is only the grace of conviction, thank God for it, and it shall develop into repentance and conversion. How great a mercy it is that you are not cursed with obstinacy and impenitency !

A MEANS OF RECEIVING THE SPIRIT.

"Give due attendance," says an old writer, "to the ordinances of God ; they are the pool which the angel, at certain times, will move. It is a text worthy of observation, which you read of in the prophet Isaiah, where the Lord says that 'thy teachers shall not be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers, and thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.' Mark the connection ; you shall see your teachers, and seeing them, shall hear a voice, that is, of the Spirit. The ordinances are they which convey the Spirit in its motions to us ; and to this purpose I may accommodate that of the prophet Zechariah, where it is said that the two olive branches did empty themselves of the golden oil by the two golden pipes, and so ran into the candlestick. This candlestick is the church, the oil is the motions of God's Spirit, and these motions they run through ordinances ; they are those golden pipes which convey the Spirit into your hearts. It is with the Spirit and holy ordinances as it with the blood and spirit, and the veins and arteries ; for as these convey the blood and spirit to each part, so also ordinances convey the graces and comforts of the Spirit to each believing member of Christ. Wait upon the preaching of the Word, and then wait also upon prayer ; that will be a means whereby you shall obtain the Spirit. Christ makes this an encouragement to prayer : 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him ?'" (Luke xi, 13).

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word" (Acts x, 44.).

REST IN CHRIST.

Long did I toil, and knew no earthly rest ;
 Far did I rove, and found no certain home ;
 At last I sought them in His sheltering breast,
 Who opes His arms, and bids the weary come :
 With Him I found a home, a rest Divine ;
 And I since then am His, and He is mine.

Yes! He is mine! and nought of earthly things,
 Not all the charms of pleasure, wealth, or power,
 The fame of heroes, or the pomp of kings,
 Could tempt me to forego His love an hour.
 Go, worthless world, I cry, with all that's thine!
 Go, I my Saviour's am, and He is mine.

The good I have is from His stores supplied ;
 The ill is only what He deems the best ;
 He for my Friend, I'm rich with nought beside ;
 And poor without Him, though of all possest :
 Changes may come ; I take, or I resign,
 Content, while I am His, while He is mine.

Whate'er my change, in Him no change is seen ;
 A glorious Sun, that wanes not nor declines ;
 Above the clouds and storms He walks serene,
 And sweetly on His people's darkness shines ;
 All may depart ; I fret not, nor repine,
 While I my Saviour's am, while He is mine.

He stays me falling, lifts me up when down,
 Reclaims me wandering, guards from every foe ;
 Plants on my worthless brow the victor's crown ;
 Which in return before His feet I throw,
 Grieved that I cannot better grace His shrine,
 Who deigns to own me His, as He is mine.

While here, alas! I know but half His love,
But half discern Him, and but half adore;
But when I meet Him in the realms above,
I hope to love Him better, praise Him more,
And feel, and tell, amid the choir divine,
How fully I am His, and He is mine.—*H. F. Lyte.*

CHAPTER XXXVII.

(*Thirty-seventh Meeting.*)

IMPULSES AND SUGGESTIONS.

WE must test these, as to their origin and nature, by the pure Word of God. Just so far as they answer to its spirit and teachings they are to be cherished; but if they accord not with them, we must suspect our obligation to be influenced by them. What captain of a vessel at sea would ever think of steering his charge by fancies of his own brain, or those of any passenger that may be sailing with him? No: he has the chart, and by that he is guided. Whatever impressions or fancies he may have contrary to that he throws to the winds. If he run on rocks, he would rather do so guided by his chart than his fancy. The chart is his guide: if that lead him astray he is not responsible, providing he has understood and followed it fully. Any disaster in this case would by his masters be attributed to the chart, and he would still be honoured as a faithful servant.

God has given us the Bible as our chart to heaven. That is to guide us in our belief and practice. If we follow that *we* are safe, whatever the issues. But if we follow our impulses and suggestions, as arising in ourselves or as coming from others, we go at uncertainty. We *may* succeed; but the probabilities are against us: and if we fail, we ourselves must bear the blame *and* the loss.

Let us then, with the Word of God in our hands, go on our way; following its directions in things to believe, and in things to practise. Let us take that as the *light* to our feet and the *lantern* to our path; as "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" as able to make us "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Many have been lost to the Church, and perhaps to heaven, who have followed impulses and suggestions either apart from Scripture, or as equal to it; but no one has gone wrong before God, and missed heaven at last, who has followed the Bible in holy things, with a sincere heart and a pure aim.

THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

The phrase, "assurance of faith," denotes a faith which is free from doubts; or in other words, a perfect faith. The experience of those who have lived and do live in the enjoyment of this faith, so far as we have any knowledge of that experience, sustains the view just given. They who possess the state of mind implied in the phrase, have an implicit and unwavering confidence in God, and in all the ways and things of God. "They live by faith," says John Rogers, the martyr, "in the Son of God: above the letter, in the *LIFE*; above the form, in the *POWER*; above self, in a higher self; so that they are no longer themselves, but are by the grace of God what they are; not doubting that they shall appear perfect in Christ's righteousness, being pardoned by His death, purged by His blood, sanctified by His Spirit, and saved by His power."

We have very striking instances of this faith in the characters enumerated in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Abel, in the assurance of faith, "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;" Enoch, by this faith, "had this testimony, that he pleased God;" Abraham, in this faith, "went out, not knowing whither he went," and "when he was tried, offered up Isaac;" Moses, in this faith, "esteemed the reproach

of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;" Gideon, Barak, David, Samuel, and the Prophets, these, in the exercise of this faith, "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

My brother, do you aspire to stand with these worthies in the character of your faith? It is your privilege. Yes; you may have that faith which shall be as strong for you and your circumstances as was their faith for them; and which shall accomplish as much for you, in your sphere and day, as their faith accomplished for them; and though you may have no report on the pages of history, you shall have a record in the book of God's remembrance, and a reward in the ages of eternity.

DUTIES OF SERVANTS.

Servants are to feel interested in the welfare of their masters' business, and to pray for its success, as did the servant of Abraham: "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham" (Gen. xxiv, 12).

Servants must be prompt and expeditious in their masters' work:—"Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way: send me away, that I may go to my master" (Gen. xxiv, 56).

Servants must obey their masters from pure motives; and with a consciousness that God sees them and will judge them. They are to serve man, as the Lord's servants, and do everything as unto Him: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Eph. vi, 5—7). "Servants, obey in

all things your masters according to the flesh ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God " (Col. iii, 22).

Servants are to try to please their masters in all things :— " Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things " (Titus ii, 9).

Servants must be respectful, honest, faithful :— " Not answering again ; not purloining ; but showing all fidelity " (Titus ii, 10).

FORGETFULNESS OF PRAYER.

We may sometimes pray in such absent-mindedness, or in such indifference, as to forget very soon after we have arisen from our knees whether we have prayed at all. Thomas Fuller once wrote his experience on this point :—" Lord, this day I disputed with myself whether or no I had said my prayers this morning, and I could not call to mind any remarkable passage whence I could certainly conclude that I had offered my prayers unto Thee. Frozen affections, which left no spark of remembrance behind them ! Yet at last I hardly recovered one token, whence I was assured that I had said my prayers. It seems I had said them, and only said them rather by heart than with my heart. Alas ! are not devotions thus done, in effect left undone ? Well Jacob advised his sons, at their second going into Egypt, ' Take double money in your hand ; peradventure it was an oversight.' So, Lord, I come with my second morning sacrifice ; be pleased to accept it, which I desire and endeavour to present with a better devotion than I did before."

SUPPORT IN AFFLICTION.

Mr. Venn was on a visit at the house of a very intimate friend, where a lady of great piety was ill of a dangerous and exquisitely painful disorder. The physician who attended her, one day observed to Mr. Venn, that he was quite at a loss to explain how she was enabled to bear such a severity of suffer-

ing as he well knew attended her complaint, with so much tranquillity and so little symptom of murmuring and restlessness. "Can you account for it, sir?" he added. "Sir," said Mr. Venn, "that lady possesses what you and I ought to pray for,—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost."

CUMBERED ABOUT MUCH SERVING.

"Cumbered about much serving," "careful and troubled about many things," were the failings of Martha, a disciple of Jesus, on a certain occasion. She was not called into this state by Jesus. There was no compulsory circumstances influencing her to this. She made the "much serving" herself, and then cumbered herself with it: she occasioned the "many things," and then was "careful and troubled" about them. Her mind became harassed and perplexed through her own choice. She imposed upon herself more than she could do, and then wished to disturb her sister in her devotions, to "come and help her."

Oh, how very much this is like some Christians now! "Much serving" of self, of others, which neither others have required nor themselves have needed, encumbers them. Their anxious wish to make great provision for themselves and others has really brought them into straits and difficulties, so that their minds scarcely know which service to render first. They have so "many things" to think of, to arrange for, to foresee and forestal, or provide for; so many letters to write, friends to entertain, calls to make, dishes to cook, servants to command, business orders to meet, &c., &c., that they are careful and troubled about them, even so much as to almost forget the Saviour; and more than this, they would even have others in the family or business, who can find time and disposition to sit at the Saviour's feet, come and help them; and thus leave Christ to serve tables. Nay, beyond even this: they think the things in which they are engaged so essential, that they would fain presume to ask the Lord Himself to *bid* them arise

and help them. Oh, how possible it is for *secular* things to engross the mind! We know how the Saviour rebuked Martha for her self-imposed care, and commended Mary for her happy choice.

Let us not forget that this "much serving" of Martha was for Jesus and His disciples. Yet He censured it, and was more pleased with Mary's love. If Christ is displeased with us when we are cumbered about much serving for Him, what must He be when we are so chiefly for our own selfish ends? What may we learn from this? viz., *that to be humble, loving, obedient disciples of Christ, is far better for us and more pleasing to Him, than to be cumbered about much serving of Him in the forms, ceremonies, rituals, and general OUTWARD things of His house and His religion.*

VICTORY IN JESUS.

"Since I last wrote," says Carvosso in his diary, "I have had severe conflicts with the powers of darkness; but Jesus has proved my strong tower. O what a blessed thing it is to have a refuge to flee to in the time of distress! Since the storm it has been a blessed calm; all joy, all peace. I have had sweet communion, and a closer walk, with God. I have no footing of my own to stand upon; this is all sand; but Christ is a rock; and, glory be to God, I am built upon Him, and all the storms of this life, and floods of temptation from the enemy, have not washed me off. I bless the Lord, I never lived more in the liberty of the sons of God, nor felt more of the worth of Christ, than of late. I can truly say, 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.'

"Had I Gabriel's heavenly tongue,
This should ever be my song;
Earthly things are far too tame
To divert me from the Lamb.'"

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST.

The death of Jesus occupied a very prominent feature in the Christian experience of St. Paul. Around this he seemed to revolve as a planet around its centre. If he gloried, it was in the "Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" if he gave preference to any knowledge, it was the knowledge of "Jesus Christ and Him CRUCIFIED;" if he chose a theme for his preaching, it was "Christ CRUCIFIED," although foolishness to the Greeks, and a stumbling-block to the Jews; if he wanted a phrase by which the more expressly to set forth the process of his dying to sin and the world, and the sufferings which he endured for religion, he went to Christ and Calvary to choose them: "*I am crucified with Christ.*"

Shall we shun Christ *crucified*? If He the Son of God endured the crucifixion of the cross for our salvation, shall we be ashamed to confess the truth, to rely upon it, and, if necessary, to take our place by His side? If from being with Christ on the cross, we can go to paradise to be with Him for ever, shall we seek to avoid crucifixion with Him?

HUMILITY.

Humility does not aspire after lofty things: "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or things too high for me" (Ps. cxxxi, 1).

The Lord hath regard to humility: "Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the humble" (Ps. cxxxviii, 6).

Wisdom is associated with humility: "With the lowly is wisdom" (Prov. xi, 2).

Honour is an effect of humility: "Before honour is humility" (Prov. xv, 33). "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xviii, 14).

Greatness is the reward of humility: "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii, 4).

Humility is to stand connected with the holiest and most faithful: "When ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke xvii, 10).

Humility must be in the spirit of our services for God: "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind" (Acts xx, 19). "To walk humbly with thy God" (Mic. vi, 8).

Humility is to be upon us as clothing; "Be clothed with humility" (1 Pet. v, 5).

There is a blessing upon humility: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God" (Matt. v, 3).

Humility is one attribute of God: "Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth" (Ps. cxiii, 6).

Humility was a feature in Jesus: "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet" (John xiii, 14).

Humility is a grace which should exist mutually among Christians: "In honour preferring one another" (Rom. xii, 10). "I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. xii, 3).

THE BLESSING OF THE LORD.

How intensely earnest was Esau to obtain the blessing of his father Isaac! and this was only a temporal blessing. How anxious are some to get the blessing of their earthly sovereign! Children are very solicitous to have a parent's blessing ere they leave their presence for some new home. Brother, let it be your chief prayer and principal endeavour to secure the blessing of your heavenly Father and King. His blessing maketh rich, and bringeth no sorrow with it. His blessing is no stinted blessing; but large, liberal, lasting, corresponding with His character, and with your deep and vast necessities.

"Let Him bless me," says Mrs. Rowe, "and I shall be

blessed—blessed without reserve or limitation—blessed in my going out and my coming in, in my sitting down and rising up—blessed in time, and blessed to all eternity. That blessing from Thy lips will influence the whole creation, and attend me wherever I am. It shall go before as a leading light, and follow me as my protecting angel. When I lie down it will cover me. I shall rest beneath the shadow of the Most High, and dwell safely in the secret of His tabernacle.”

“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Num. vi, 24—26).

“The Lord will bless His people with peace” (Ps. xxix, 11).

“God, even our own God, shall bless us” (Ps. lxxvii, 6).

“The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion” (Ps. cxxviii, 5).

“Thy blessing is upon Thy people” (Ps. iii, 8).

“He that hath clean hands and a pure heart shall receive the blessing of the Lord” (Ps. xxiv, 4, 5).

“The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we bless you in the name of the Lord” (Ps. cxxix, 8).

“I will pour My blessing on thy offspring” (Isa. xlv, 3).

“THERE SHALL BE SHOWERS OF BLESSINGS”
(Ez. xxxiv, 26).

SEE HOW THESE CHRISTIANS LOVE !

Giver of concord, Prince of peace,

Meek, lamb-like Son of God,

Bid our unruly passions cease

By Thy atoning blood.

Rebuke our rage; our passions chide;

Our stubborn wills control;

Beat down our wrath, root out our pride,

And calm each troubled soul.

Subdue in us the carnal mind,

Its enmity destroy;

With cords of love our spirits bind,

And melt us into joy.

Us into closest union draw,
 And in our inward parts
 Let kindness sweetly write her law,
 And love command our hearts.
 Saviour, look down with pitying eyes,
 Our jarring wills control;
 Let cordial, kind affections rise,
 And harmonise the soul.
 O let us find the ancient way
 Our wond'ring foes to move,
 And force the heathen world to say,
 See how these Christians love!

C. Wesley.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

(Thirty-eighth Meeting.)

LEAVING THE WORLD.

It is no wonder that Christ's people should sometimes wish for the wings of a dove, that they might fly away and be at rest. But strong as the wish may be, it must be kept in subjection to God's time. You must remain patient all the days of your appointment on earth. When He has fulfilled His designs in you, He will say, "It is enough, come up higher."

Were all God's saints to be taken away from earth to paradise, or removed to solitude, where would be the "salt" to preserve the world from putrefaction? the "light" to illumine its darkness? the "workmen" to build up the temple of the Lord? the soldiers to fight His battles? the apostles to go into all the world and preach the Gospel? Willing and desirous, therefore, as you may be to go to heaven, it is "profitable," perhaps, to the Church and the world that you remain. Let it be your aim

rather to be kept from the *evil* of the world than to be taken from the world itself. It was for this the blessed Redeemer prayed for all His people: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Ah, it is the "evil" in the world, as it exists in ourselves, in society, in Satan, that is our annoyance and our misery. Could we be kept (and we can by almighty grace) from our own evil, rising and reigning within us; from the evil of others touching us, in their example, words, or things; from the evil one, Satan, influencing and controlling us,—we should not wish to "fly away and be at rest." We should even now "enter into rest," having ceased from sin. It is evil in some form, relation, or influence, that makes our cup bitter, our way rough, our crosses trials, our life a burden. Were the Saviour's prayer answered in us, O how we should in meekness and humility abide the coming of the Lord! How we should walk above the storms and clouds of earth! How we should exult in a present heaven, and think it scarcely possible that there could be a *happier* state than this. *Not to leave the world, but to live in it free from its evil, and in subjection to the will of God, should be our prayer and endeavour.*

REJOICING IN GOD.

"Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart" (Ps. xxxii, 11).

"Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous" (Ps. xxxiii, 1).

We must rejoice in His *defence*:—"Let all those that put their trust in Thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy because Thou defendest them: let them also that love Thy name be joyful in Thee" (Ps. v, 11).

We must rejoice in His *mercy*:—"I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy" (Ps. xxxii, 7).

Our rejoicing in God must be *for the benefit of others*:—"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the righteous shall hear thereof, and be glad" (Ps. xxxiv, 2).

Our rejoicing in God must be *great* :—"Let the righteous be glad ; let them rejoice before God ; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice" (Ps. lxxviii, 3). "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord ; my soul shall be joyful in my God" (Ps. lxi, 10).

We are to rejoice in the Lord more than *in any earthly good* : "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom ; neither let the mighty man glory in his might ; nor let the rich man glory in his riches : but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, who exerciseth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth" (Jer. ix, 23—24).

We are to rejoice in God *in the deepest adversity* : "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall ; yet will I rejoice in the Lord ; I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. iii, 17, 18).

We are to rejoice in God *always* :—"Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4).

We are to rejoice in God *FOR EVER* :—"Rejoice EVER-MORE" (1 Thess. v. 16).

THE MIND OF JESUS.

Not only is Jesus our example in the outward life which we are to manifest to the world, but also in the *inward* life which we are to manifest to God. We must have the *mind* of Jesus within as well as the *footsteps* of Jesus without ; and as we *tread* in the one we are to *possess* the other. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii, 5). "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest to your souls" (Matt. xi, 29).

What the mind of Jesus was it is not difficult to find by a study of His life. It was a *patient* mind, a *gentle* mind, a

noble mind, a loving mind, a happy mind, a thankful mind, a constant mind, a forgiving mind, a perfect mind.

If this mind of Jesus dwell in us, we shall find *rest* to our souls. Dissatisfaction, anxiety, fear, and everything which is the *opposite* of this mind, will retire. O to have the mind of Jesus! Here is *REST*—a Sabbath every day, calm, quiet, sunny, holy, as the Sabbath of Paradise.

“ Jesus, shall I never be
Firmly grounded upon Thee ?
Never by Thy work abide,
Never in Thy wounds reside ?
O how wavering is *my* mind,
Toss'd about with every wind !
O how quickly doth my heart
From the living God depart.
Plant, and root, and fix in me,
All the mind that was in Thee ;
Settled peace I then shall find ;
Jesu's is a quiet mind.
I shall fully be restored
To the image of my Lord ;
Witnessing to all mankind
Jesu's is a *perfect* mind.”

DUTIES OF MASTERS.

Masters must be prompt in the payment of wages :—“ The wages of him that is hired, shall not abide with thee all night until the morning” (Lev. xix, 13).

Masters are not to rule with severity, but in the fear of God : “ Thou shalt not rule over them with rigour, but shalt fear thy God” (Lev. xxv, 43). “ Forbearing threatening ; knowing that your Master also is in heaven ; neither is there respect of persons with Him” (Eph. vi, 9).

Masters are to give to their servants what is just and equitable, and to have no respect of persons :—“ Masters give unto your

servants that which is just and equal: knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven" (Col. iv. 1). "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondsman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee" (Deut. xv, 15). "Did not He that made me in the womb make him? and did not One fashion us in the womb?" (Job xxxi, 15). "I will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages" (Mal. iii, 5).

PEACE OF MIND.

How apt we are to suppose that peace of mind depends upon external things! When agitated within, we instantly think, O if I had but that thing, or if I was in such a place! or if I could see some dear friend, &c., I should soon get rid of this distress, and obtain peace. Brother, peace of mind is a blessing *within*, not without. It is not in cities or in deserts; in possession of temporal power or in temporal insignificance and weakness; in society or in seclusion; it is **WITHIN YOU**. It is a blessing which, if you do not have in yourself, cannot exist for you in anything else. "The kingdom of God is within you." Keep the heart right with the Lord in faith and love, and the life right in obedience to His will, and you will be contented with any circumstances in which Providence may be pleased to place you. You will have peace of mind whatever tumult there may be in the world.

HAPPINESS IN THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

Dr. Doddridge, in writing to his wife, who was absent from home, says, "My days begin, pass, and end in pleasure, and seem short because they are so delightful. It may seem strange to say it, but really so it is, I hardly feel that I want anything. I often think of you and pray for you, and bless God on your account, and please myself with the hope of many comfortable days, and weeks, and years with you; yet I am not at all anxious about your return, or indeed about anything else. And the reason, the great and sufficient reason

is, that I have more of the presence of God with me than I remember ever to have enjoyed in any one month of my life. He enables me to live for Him, and to live with Him. When I awake in the morning, which is always before it is light, I address myself to Him, and converse with Him, speak to Him while I am lighting my candle and putting on my clothes, and have often more delight before I come out of my chamber, though it be hardly a quarter of an hour after my awaking, than I have enjoyed for whole days, or, perhaps, weeks of my life. He meets me in my study, in secret, in family devotions. It is pleasant to read, pleasant to compose, pleasant to converse with my friends at home; pleasant to visit those abroad—the poor, the sick; pleasant to write letters of necessary business by which any good can be done; pleasant to go out and preach the Gospel to poor souls, of which some are thirsting for it, and others dying without it; pleasant in the week day to think how near another Sabbath is; but, oh, much, much more pleasant to think how near eternity is, and how short the journey through this wilderness, and that it is but a step from earth to heaven.”

Thus we see how the presence of God to a saint can more than supply the absence of the dearest friends; how it can make every place a heaven; how it can give pleasantness to every work, and light up with glory the prospect of eternity.

“With Thee conversing, we forget
All time, and toil, and care;
Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
If Thou, my God, art here.”

AT THE FEET OF JESUS.

If, like Mary, we go and sit at the feet of Jesus, we make choice of the “one thing needful,” the “good part” which shall not be taken away from us. Jesus will not repulse us, or look shyly upon us. He will welcome us, smile upon us, and bless us. While on the one hand we take the position of learners,

He, on the other, will take the character of a Teacher, and speak unto us the gracious "words of eternal life."

He will speak to us words of wisdom, love, truth, purity, power; words concerning His Father, Himself, and the Holy Spirit; words about angels, spirits, heaven, hell, the resurrection; words to succour, comfort, guide, and strengthen; words to lighten our darkness, to defend our weakness, and to sanctify us from our corruptions; words unequalled by any words that man or angel ever spake.

We ought, as learners, to hear His words in a way corresponding with His character, and with the nature of the words themselves. With reverence, humility, attention, faith, prayer, retentiveness of memory, firm purpose to practise them, we should hear His words.

If we thus hear His words, we shall become wise, holy, useful followers of the Lamb.

Sitting at the feet of Jesus and thus hearing His words will be our *security*. Satan cannot touch us there to injure us; sin can have no controlling influence over us there; the world cannot ruin us there; error cannot infuse its poisonous seeds into our minds there. Jesus will be our protector. He will encompass us as a wall of fire. He must be conquered before we are. It is when we wander from the feet of Jesus, or remaining, are indifferent to His words, or give any one else our ears to teach us, that we are in danger. It is our *honour* to be at the feet of Jesus. Do the great of this earth think it an honour to go to the feet of earthly majesty, how much more is it to sit at the feet of the Heavenly? Let us remember we are not *under* His feet; that would imply vassalage, and that we were His footstool; no, we are *at* His feet, His *pupils*. His *enemies*, who will not learn of Him, shall be made His footstool. It is our *happiness* to sit at the feet of Jesus. By and bye, from His feet, He will lift us to His throne.

"O that I could for ever sit

With Mary at the Master's feet!

Be this my happy choice!

My only care, delight, and bliss,
 My joy, my heaven on earth, be this,
 To hear the Bridegroom's voice!"

DOUBTFUL RELIGION.

Whatever may be the nature of *our* religion, it is very certain that there was nothing doubtful about the religion of the apostles. They possessed the utmost confidence and assurance. Their religion was more than a "hopeful religion," or a "flattering religion," or a "probable religion." It was a religion of certainty, which agreed with their consciousness and spoke out in their lives. "I KNOW," says St. Paul, "whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He will keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." "We KNOW," he again says, "that we have a building of God in the heavens." "We KNOW," says St. John, "that we are of God, by His Spirit which He hath given unto us."

Has religion lost any of its virtue or capability of acting upon us; or have we lost our capacity of receiving religion in the same certain and undoubted manner that they did? No, religion is the same in its powers of adaptation to us, and we are the same in our capacity of receiving it. Let us, then, claim a positive, satisfactory religion; a religion which shall find its image in that of the apostles and their Lord; a religion not living in clouds and mists, but in sunshine and peace; a religion which shall have the inscription and stamp of heaven upon it, making it current wherever it shall go, and giving us to feel that we have the true coin, minted and circulated under the direct patronage of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

"Where the indubitable seal
 That ascertains the kingdom mine?
 The powerful stamp I long to feel,
 The signature of love divine!
 O shed it in my heart abroad,
 Fulness of love, of heaven, of God!"

Again—

“Short of Thy love I would not stop,
A stranger to the Gospel hope,
The sense of sin forgiven;
I would not, Lord, my soul deceive,
Without the inward witness live,
That antepast of heaven.”

SECURITY IN GOD.

“God is said,” says Thomas Fuller, “to have brought the Israelites out of Egypt on eagles’ wings. Now eagles, when removing their young ones, have a different posture from other fowl proper to themselves (fit it is that there should be a distinction between sovereigns and subjects), carrying their prey in their talons, but young ones on their backs, so interposing their whole bodies betwixt them and harm. The old eagle’s body is the young eagle’s shield, and must be shot through before her young ones can be hurt.

“Thus God, in saving the Jews, put himself betwixt them and danger. Surely God, as loving under the law, is no less gracious in the Gospel; our souls are better secured, not only above His wings, but in His body; your life is hid with Christ in God. No fear of harm, God first must be pierced before we can be prejudiced.”

THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF GOD.

“For Thy lovingkindness,” says David, “is before mine eyes” (Ps. xxvi, 3). What theme, with more comfort, fullness, beauty, God-likeness, can we place before us for meditation than this! We should look at it as it exists in Himself, in its internal, infinite, almighty, unchangeable perfection. We should look at it in its manifestation *for* us, in the provision of nature and redemption; and then at its manifestation *in* us, in conviction, conversion, regeneration, adoption, and all the changes and blessings of grace which we have received from

Him. We should look at it in the things which He has prepared for us in the heavenly world.

If we thus look at the lovingkindness of God, it will increase in magnitude; it will comfort us; it will encourage us; it will strengthen us; it will make us thankful. It will draw out our souls in holy songs of praise, and our lives in earnest acts of obedience and consecration.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

FOLLOWING JESUS.

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee;
All things else for Thee forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shalt be.
Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought, or hoped, or known;
Yet how rich is my condition,
God and heaven are still my own!
Let the world despise and leave me,
It has left my Saviour too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me,
Thou art not, like them, untrue.
And whilst Thou dost smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate, and friends disown me,
Show Thy face, and all is bright.
Go, thou earthly fame and treasure,
Come disaster, scorn, and pain;
In Thy service pain is pleasure,
With Thy favour loss is gain.
I have called Thee, Abba, Father,
I have set my heart on Thee;
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather,
All must work for good to me."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

(Thirty-ninth Meeting.)

CONVERSATION IN HEAVEN.

WE may be said to have our conversation in heaven,—*First*, when our aim is to get to heaven; and our aim is shown by fixing our eye upon it, centering our hope in it, and seeking, in whatsoever we do, a preparation for it. *Secondly*, when we have communion with Christ in heaven, in our thoughts, prayers, and the whole of our spiritual life. *Thirdly*, when our affections are placed upon heaven, as our home, as the abode of holiness: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” *Fourthly*, when we live as citizens of heaven, travelling thither on the King’s highway of holiness.

We should thus have our conversation in heaven,—*First*, because all the spiritual good we have received and now enjoy, comes down from heaven. Should we always be drinking of the stream and never think of the Fountain; always partaking of the light, and never look at its Source? *Secondly*, because the most valuable things we now possess, and hope to enjoy for ever, are in heaven. Our Father is there; our Saviour is there; our Comforter is there; our ministering angels are there; our departed brethren and sisters in the Lord are there; our loved little ones are there; the general assembly and church of the first-born, comprised of all the faithful from all ages and climes, are there; our hope, joy, inheritance, mansion, crown, honour, glory, immortality, and eternal life, are all there. *Thirdly*, because we are travelling on towards heaven, and do not know the day nor the hour when the end of the journey will come.

"Patient the appointed race to run,
This weary world we cast behind;
From strength to strength we travel on,
The New Jerusalem to find:
Our labour this, our only aim,
To find the New Jerusalem."

GOD OUR PORTION.

The Psalmist more than two thousand years ago enjoyed God as his portion:—"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup" (Ps. xvi, 5). And so Jeremiah after him: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him" (Lam. iii, 24).

If you have God for your portion, you *can have* no more. In having Him, you have all things, and the possibilities of infinite things besides; as the earth, which has the sun, has what is greater than itself, and all the benefits which may in the future come from it, so long as the relation is sustained between them:—"As the scattered rays of light," says Dr. Caird, "are all included in the focus, as the fountain contains the streams, as the object reflected is prior to and nobler than the different reflections of it—so all finite and created good is contained in Him who is the supreme good; all earthly excellence is but the partial emanation, the more or less bright reflection of the Great Original. To have a portion, therefore, in God, is to possess that which includes in itself all created good. The man who is in possession of some great masterpiece in painting or sculpture, need not envy others who have only casts or copies of it. The original plate or stereotype is more valuable than any impressions or engravings thrown off from it; and he who owns the former owns that which includes, is capable of producing, all the latter. . . . Surveying the wonders of creation, or even with the Word of inspiration in his hand, the Christian can say, 'Glorious though these things be, to me belongs that which is more glorious far. The streams are precious, but I have the Fountain; the vesture is

beautiful, but the Weaver is mine; the portrait in its every lineament is lovely, but that Great Original whose beauty it but feebly depicts is mine, my own. 'God is my portion, the Lord is mine inheritance.' To me belongs all actual and all possible good, all created and uncreated beauty, all that eye hath seen or imagination conceived; and more than that, for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love Him. All things and beings, all that life reveals or death conceals, everything within the boundless possibilities of creating power and wisdom, is mine; for God, the Creator and Fountain of all, is mine."

THE PURCHASE PRICE.

It is customary in trade and merchandise for him who offers the highest price to have the goods which are offered for sale. Now, if this was the principle upon which men carried on merchandise for their souls, how different would be the religious condition of the world! There are two great purchasers going about among men, to buy their souls, God and Satan, Satan comes and says, pointing to the sinful things of this life, "All these will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me." And oh, how many, flattered by their glittering appearance, accept the offer and give the worship! God comes and offers Himself, His Son, His Spirit, His religion, and heaven. He offers the things of this life in their purity, usefulness, and adaptation, and also the promise of the life which is to come; but oh, how few accept the offer, because the price is spiritual and not temporal! Men sell their souls much as children would sell a diamond, for toys which please in their novelty and prettiness. Look at a man in the sale of his earthly goods over his counter, or in the warehouse; he is careful to have them properly marked in value, and to have the payment in good current money; but see, perhaps that same man has no value at all attached to his soul, and hence, when a flattering offer is made by Satan for it, he does as he would

with goods which he regards of little value when a good price is offered for them,—he lets him have it ; and thinks, too, that he has made a good bargain. O that men were as wise in religious business as in temporal !

Brother, will you be among the wise or the foolish ? Which offer do you take ? Satan's or God's ? If you accept the offer which God makes, you shall receive in that, Satan's offer purified and consecrated, and infinitely more besides. But if you accept the offer of Satan, he will deceive you in the payment ; and you shall not only lose all of God's, but all of Satan's too, in the end, and become a ruined bankrupt for ever in the prison of perdition. **GIVE UP ALL TO CHRIST, AND RECEIVE ALL FROM HIM.**

CONSISTENCY.

Let us study to be consistent Christians, four-square Christians, so that wherever we are we shall appear the same, upright, loving, holy followers of the Saviour. God looks for this, and accounts much of it. The world looks for this, and if it does not find it, it takes occasion not so much to reproach us—that would be what we deserved—but to reproach Christianity, which does not deserve it.

The following picture drawn by *Venning*, though in somewhat rough colours, is too true in its representation of many professors in our day :—" 'Tis strange to see how some strain at gnats and swallow camels ; make conscience of tithing mint and cummin, and yet make none of the weightier things of the law. Swear they will not, *yet make no bones* of lying, dissembling, doing to others what they would not have others do to them ; of self-seeking, though to the breach of their promise, and to the hurt of others. *Herod* would not dispense with his oath, but could dispense with his conscience, and commit murder without a scruple. Many persons make conscience of observing all ordinances (as they phrase it), which make little or no conscience of neglecting many duties, or doing them negligently, without sense or feeling. *Dinah's* brethren cannot in

conscience marry their sister to an uncircumcised man, yet can without conscience marry their own souls to revenge and murder. Many cannot in conscience keep communion and maintain fellowship with such as they acknowledge godly, *because they are not of their opinion*, and in their way, who yet maintain communion with such as they judge not godly, *being of their opinion*, and in their way. *Is this regular conscience ?*"

RESISTING TEMPTATION.

There are always two arguments which we may use against temptation to sin, from whatever source it may come : First, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Secondly, *How can I do this great wickedness, and wrong my own soul?* If we always look upon sin as a dishonour and grievance to God, and as an injury and corruption to our own souls, we shall by Divine grace escape falling into temptations to sin.

THE SEEKING SOUL.

Although you may feel the burden, the pollution, the aggravation, and the rebellion of your sins, do not lie down in sorrow as those for whom no comfort remaineth ; or in despair, as those who have no hope held out to them. You may at least venture so far as the four lepers of Samaria : " Why sit we here until we die ? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there ; and if we sit here, we die also. Now, therefore, come, and let us fall into the host of the Syrians : if they save us alive, we shall live ; and if they kill us, we shall but die " (2 Kings vii, 3, 4).

Let this be your spirit, penitent one. If you remain where you are, you will most certainly perish : and if you go to God in Christ you can but perish ; but here you have an alternative which gives you hope : you *may* live by going to Him. Did I say, you *may* ? I will say, you *shall* ; for with Him there is

mercy and plenteous redemption. He is good and ready to forgive. He invites you to go to Him. He sends His Spirit, His angels, His people, to bring you. Arise, then, and go to Him, as the prodigal did, forsaking all your former way of life; bringing your true state and character, and confessing your sins and unworthiness. And as you thus go like the prodigal, God will come to you like the Father. He will run towards you, have compassion upon you, fall on your neck and kiss you. He will take you as you are and receive you into His family, and give you undoubted evidences of your forgiveness: "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry" (Luke xv, 22, 23).

Go to Him as Esther entered into the presence of the king, saying, "If I perish, I perish." Did she perish? No, verily: the golden sceptre was held out to her as a sign of favour, and the request accompanied it: "What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given to thee, to the half of the kingdom" (Esth. v, 3). Will thy God be less gracious to thee than Esther's king? Behold, He sits on **THE THRONE OF GRACE**. He invites thee to come **BOLDLY**, that thou mightest obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. He will give thee an *entire* kingdom; even the kingdom of heaven.

SEEING JESUS.

All the figures of speech which rhetoric employs; all the pictures of imagination which poets draw; all the descriptions of angels and saints, given from glowing love, fail to represent Jesus as He is seen by the humble, believing soul. The sweetness of honey to the *taste* exceeds all statements of it in words; the beauty of light to the eye is far pleasanter than any analysis of its properties; the charms of music to the ear exceed all that can be said of them in words. So a sight of Jesus is unspeakably more sweet, charming, beautiful,

satisfying, than all that has ever been heard of Him. The men of Samaria were interested in what the woman *said* about Jesus, and to some extent believed her statements; but when they saw and heard Him for themselves, they said, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying (thy saying had its weight at the time, and we believed it, but now it is as nothing; now it is lost in the better testimony), for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John iv, 42). Thus it is now; whatever faith you may have in the testimonies of the Word, ministers, and saints, concerning Christ; and whatever may be your views of Him as derived from those testimonies; all are absorbed in the greater glory, when Jesus himself stands before you in the revelation of His person and the teachings of His Spirit. The queen of Sheba heard such reports of Solomon's person, wealth, servants, that she thought he was the greatest personage living, and her desires to see him were so strong that she travelled some hundreds of miles to have the sight; and when she came and *saw* for herself the person and things of which she had heard, she said, "The half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity EXCEEDETH the fame which I heard" (1 Kings x, 5). It is the same with every one who is drawn by the truth to the sight of Him who is "GREATER THAN SOLOMON."

Are you desiring to see Jesus, because you have heard so much of Him, and because you feel that He is the ONE you *must* see or perish? He stands not far from you. Open your eyes of faith, and now you shall see Him, and say,

"I view the Lamb in His own light
Whom angels dimly see;
And gaze, transported at the sight,
To all eternity."

REGRET FOR THE PAST.

If in the review of the past you perceive many departures from rectitude; many omissions of duties; many defects in

your holiest things, it is well for you to cherish regret for them, and an earnest wish that they might not have blemished your life before God. But do not stand *brooding* over them ; or Satan may come and use them to produce discouragement and weakness within you. Take all your failings in the past to Jesus. Lay them upon Him as your Saviour, to bear them for you, or to cast them into His blood of atonement as the fountain to cleanse them away. Let the knowledge of the past in its shortcomings lead to resolution of amendment for the future. The enemy by whom you have at any one time been defeated, arm yourself with more than ordinary courage to contend with him in the time to come. The weak part which has served as an occasion of failure, set a particular guard about that, to make it secure against every foe. In a word, take the past as a warrior or merchant would, to form an experience, by which you shall the more efficiently serve God and work out your own salvation in the present and future.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT.

To love one another was not a new commandment in the duty itself ; for this had existed before in the Old Testament. But the newness of it consisted in the *manner* of the duty. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; *as I have loved you*, that ye love one another." We have only to consider how Christ has loved us, to ascertain the way in which we are to love each other ; and in that way is a *new* way, such as prophets, priests, angels, and no creature had ever walked in so far as their love to man was concerned. It is not enough, then, that we love one another—the publicans and sinners do that ; but we must love one another *AS CHRIST HAS LOVED US*.

THE MANNER OF PRAYER.

We should pray in the Holy Ghost : "Praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20).

We should pray in faith : "All things whatsoever ye ask in

prayer, BELIEVING, ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi, 22). *In the full assurance of faith*: "Let us draw near, in the full assurance of faith" (Heb. x, 22).

We should pray in a forgiving spirit: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. vi, 12).

We should pray with the heart: "Ye shall seek Me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all the heart" (Jer. xxix, 13). *With the whole heart*: "I entreated Thy favour with my whole heart" (Ps. cxix, 58). *With preparation of heart*: "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards Him" (Job xi, 13). *With a true heart*: "Let us draw near with a true heart" (Heb. x, 22).

We should pray with the soul: "I pour out my soul in me" (Ps. xlii, 4). *With the spirit and understanding*: "I will pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also" (1 Cor. xiv, 15).

We should pray with confidence in God: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us" (1 John v, 14). *With submission to God*: "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done" (Luke xxii, 42). *With unfeigned lips* (Ps. xvii, 1). *With holiness* (1 Tim. ii, 8). *With humility* (2 Chr. vii, 14; xxxiii, 12). *With desire to be heard* (Neh. i, 6; Ps. xvii, 1; lv, 1, 2; lxi, 1). *With desire to be answered* (Ps. xxvii, 1; cii, 2; cviii, 6; cxliii, 1). *With boldness* (Heb. iv, 16). *With earnestness* (1 Thess. iii, 10; James v, 17). *With importunity* (Gen. xxxii, 26; Luke xi, 8, 9; xviii, 1—17).

We should pray in the name of Jesus: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it" (John xiv, 13, 14).

We should pray everywhere, and in everything: "I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere" (1 Tim. ii, 8). "In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv, 6).

BEARING THE CROSS.

The heavier cross, the nearer heaven ;
No cross without, no God within.
Death, judgment, from the heart are driven,
Amidst the world's false glare and din.
Oh happy he, with all his loss,
Whom God hath set beneath the cross !

The heavier cross, the better Christian,—
This is the touchstone God applies !
How many a garden would lie wasting,
Unwet by showers from weeping eyes !
The gold by fire is purified ;
The Christian is by trouble tried.

The heavier cross, the stronger faith ;
The loaded palm strikes deeper root ;
The vine juice sweetly issueth
When men have pressed the clustered fruit ;
And courage grows where dangers come,
Like pearls beneath the salt sea foam.

The heavier cross, the heartier prayer ;
The bruised herbs most fragrant are.
If wind and sky were always fair,
The sailor would not watch the star ;
And David's Psalms had ne'er been sung
If grief his heart had never wrung.

The heavier cross, the more aspiring ;
From vales we climb to mountain crest ;
The pilgrim, of the desert tiring,
Longs for the Canaan of his rest.
The dove has here no rest in sight,
And to the ark she wings her flight,

The heavier cross, the easier dying,
 Death is a friendlier face to see;
 To life's decay one bids defying,—
 From life's distress, one then is free.
 The cross sublimely lifts her faith
 To Him who triumphed over death.
 Thou Crucified! the cross I carry—
 The longer may it dearer be;
 And, lest I faint whilst here I tarry,
 Implant Thou such a heart in me,
 That faith, hope, love, may flourish there,
 Till for my cross the crown I wear! *Anon.*

CHAPTER XL.

(*Fortieth Meeting.*)

RELIGION A POWER.

LET us not take to religion as a mere form, or something which is only external. Having the "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," is one of the last and blackest characteristics of a wicked man contained in the Scriptures. To put on religion as we put on our clothes, or as persons put on masks, is to have no more religion than the clothes or masks have life.

Religion, while it cannot be revealed to us, nor recommended to us, nor enjoyed or shown by us without form, is nevertheless in its essence *a principle of power*; and in the absence of this, is of no real service to us before God. "The various representations and images employed by the Holy Spirit to describe the nature of true religion, supposes it to be a principle of power. Religion, according to the Scriptures, burns and glows like fire, penetrates and flavours like salt, sweeps and forces like the wind, struggles for development like a

"well of water springing up, influences and transforms like leaven, and bids defiance to all the elements of darkness, like the dayspring on high. It is described in action as labouring with strenuous effort, as striving even to agony, as running in a contested race, as wrestling with every might of bone and muscle, as fighting a deadly combat, as hungering and thirsting for righteousness, as panting for the living God. No mere form of religion can ever correspond to such representations and images as these: they all necessarily imply activity of principle and force of character. The name of being alive is not life, the painting of fire will not burn, the picture of bread will not satisfy the hungry, histrionic royalty is not kingly power, a statue is not a man, formality is not religion. The man who tries to support a religious character without an internal principle of vital power, is like the Spartan who tried to make a corpse to stand; and the confession of both will be the same, 'IT WANTS SOMETHING WITHIN.'"

A RULE OF JUDGING.

We are not to judge ourselves or others by any one particular temper or action, but by the general tenor of the life. Because you see a man irritable on one occasion, it would neither be wise nor charitable to say that his general disposition was so; because at one time a man gives a generous donation to some benevolent object, it does not follow that his habit is to be liberal; because under certain circumstances a man abstains from committing a sin which he has every facility to commit, it would be wrong to conclude that he lived in the regular resistance of all evil. The sun is sometimes for days hid behind clouds, but it would be folly for any one then to assert that that was its law; a cold day may sometimes occur in summer, but who would think of saying therefore, the summer is a cold part of the year; a tree in an orchard may one season bear little or no fruit, but the gardener does not on that account pronounce it a worthless tree.

Look at scriptural examples. Would it be wise to say that

Abimelech was a good man because he abstained from touching Abraham's wife, or that David was a bad man because he perpetrated the two crimes which stand out as a blot on his history? Would any one affirm that Judas was a sincere disciple because at one time he seemed to be so considerate of the poor; or that Peter was a hypocrite because he denied his Lord? It is true that sin is sin in whomsoever found; that those things in their characters are grievous defects; but if you look at the *general* character of David and of Abimelech, the one is good and the other evil; so, if you thus look at Peter and Judas, the one is sincere, the other hypocritical.

We are in danger of judging one another as Christians with this one-sided view. Let us guard against it. "The highway of the righteous is to depart from evil" (Prov. xvi, 17). This is his general course, though at times he may deviate or stumble in the highway. Not, then, by our deviations or stumbles, but by our habitual course, let us judge each other; as we judge of the sun, not by his spots and cloudy days, but by his general light and influences.

TEMPTATION AND SIN.

Learn to distinguish between temptation and sin. We are tempted when the snare is set, and the attraction thrown out to draw us into it; we sin in that proportion in which we yield to the attraction and fall into the snare. The temptation may be unavoidable; it may be a necessary evil connected with our circumstances in this world of probation, of wickedness, of imperfection; but sin is an act of our own, a voluntary giving way to the transgression of the law. This only is sin, for which God holds us guilty. The temptation of Joseph was a fact which arose in connection with his imprisonment, an event into which he was brought in the providence of God; but yielding to it, or committing sin, he evidently regarded as a thing in his own power. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" He repelled the attraction and avoided the snare; consequently, he remained as pure as

though no temptation had assailed him. The temptations of Jesus came from the malicious and diabolical power of Satan ; but the resistance of them came from the voluntary exercise of His holy will and nature. The latter were stronger than the former ; hence the victory, and the preserved spotlessness of the Saviour. He was in all points tempted as we are, YET WITHOUT SIN.

A MARK OF SANCTIFICATION.

"In proportion as the heart becomes sanctified," says Upham, "there is a diminished tendency to enthusiasm and fanaticism. And this is undoubtedly one of the leading tests of sanctification. One of the marks of an enthusiastic and fanatical state of mind is a fiery and unrestrained impetuosity of feeling ; a rushing on, sometimes very blindly, as if the world were in danger, or as if the great Creator were not at the helm. It is not only feeling without a good degree of judgment, but, what is the corrupting and fatal trait, it is feeling without a due degree of confidence in God. True holiness reflects the image of God in this respect as well as others ; that it is calm, thoughtful, deliberate, immutable. And can it be otherwise, since, rejecting its own wisdom and strength, it incorporates into itself the wisdom and strength of the Almighty."

MOTIONS TO DO GOOD FROM SATAN.

When Satan comes to us as "an angel of light," we may suspect that his object is to tempt us to do that which in the *appearance* shall be like his form, but in the *reality* like himself. To assist you in judging when motions to do good are from Satan, and not from God, you may take the following thoughts :—

1. A motion to do good, which may prevent the accomplishment of a greater good, is from Satan : as when Peter was tempted to rebuke our Lord for saying He must suffer many things from the elders, &c. : "Be it far from Thee, Lord ; this

shall not be unto Thee" (Matt. xvi, 22). Peter thought he was doing good in this; but he little dreamt that, could he have prevented the death of Christ, he would have prevented the world's salvation. This was from Satan, as Christ said: see verse 23.

2. A motion to do good, out of your sphere, character, and abilities, is from Satan; as when Saul and Uriah offered sacrifices; and Absalom assumed the office of judge.

3. A motion to do good at an unseasonable time, and in an unbecoming manner, is from Satan. God is a Being of order in all things; Satan the opposite.

4. When Satan moves to do good, he would have us to do it in a way which would draw out our confidence in it, as meritorious before God; as in the case of Saul of Tarsus before his conversion.

5. Satan moves us to do good when we do it in a way which would soon produce weariness, and bring about a speedy reversal of all we have done: as when Peter was so impetuous to avow his fidelity to Christ, and in a few hours after denied Him with a curse.

6. When we are moved to do those things which are merely formal and subordinate in religion, and neglect the weighty and essential, it is from Satan; as the Pharisees, who paid tithe on mint, cummin, and anise, but neglected the *weightier* matters of the law.

7. When we are moved to do good with a view to make a cloak or an apology for the commission of some sin, it is from Satan.

Let us examine well our motions to do good, so that we may have them free from all things which are contrary to the Spirit of God, and the good which we wish to accomplish.

CHRIST A FRIEND.

A man without a friend is one of the most desolate beings in the universe. But he who has a friend to whom he can confide his secrets, pour out his sorrows, seek counsel, look for

protection, and ask for help, has one who stands by him when all else forsake him. Such a friend is Jesus to His followers. Although the world may cast them off, and all earthly friends forsake, Jesus abides faithful. He is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Do we wish for love in a friend? Jesus has this in an unequalled degree. He has endured shame, poverty, reproaches, sufferings, and death for us; and all because He loved us. Do we wish for wisdom in a friend? In Jesus dwells the fulness of Divine wisdom. Do we wish for sympathy in a friend? Jesus is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Do we wish for power? "All power in heaven and earth" is given to Him. Do we need a present friend? He is ever with us. Do we require an interceding friend? He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Do we desire a wealthy friend? He is the Proprietor of all things in heaven and earth. Do we wish a faithful friend? He is not man, that He should lie, nor the son of man, that He should repent. Do we want an undying friend? He is from everlasting to everlasting.

Here, then, brother Christian, is your Friend. He has no equal: let Him have no rival. As your best and greatest Friend, love Him, obey Him, walk with Him, confide in Him, be guided by Him; and ultimately He will fulfil His promise, "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there may ye be also." Then the friendship shall be enhanced into heavenly nature and attributes. Nothing shall interrupt the flow of affection and blessings, from your Friend to you, for evermore. Your immortal necessities shall be supplied from His everlasting resources.

DUTIES OF PARENTS.

1. *To provide for their families* :—"If any man provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. v, 8).

2. *To maintain order* :—"I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, that they shall keep

the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Gen. xviii, 19). "One that ruleth well his own house" (1 Tim. iii, 4).

3. *To preserve peace* :—"See that ye fall not out by the way" (Gen. xlv, 24). "Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife" (Prov. xvii, 1).

4. *To give their children a religious education* :—"Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. vi, 7). "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. xxii, 6). "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. vi, 4).

5. *To exercise discipline and authority over their children* :—"Correct thy son, and he will give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight to thy soul" (Prov. xxix, 17). "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. xxix, 15). "He that spareth his rod hateth his own son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. xiii, 24).

6. *To set a good example* :—"I will walk before my house with a perfect heart" (Ps. ci, 2). "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke i, 6).

7. *To avoid partiality* :—"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a coat of many colours: and when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him" (Gen. xxxvii, 3, 4).

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.

In an age like this, when periodical literature is so abundant, the opinions of men so various, the *profession* of religion so

fashionable, the number of false teachers so great, and the scepticism of some who occupy high places in the church of Christ so palpable, it behoves every one who would not be "led away with the error of the wicked, or be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," or be spoiled "through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ,"—to be a faithful and unswerving adherent to the Scriptures as the only rule of Christian faith and practice. God's Word must stand *pre-eminent* in its authority and its claims. If this be surrendered, where is our anchorage ground? Will the mariner dispense with his chart for the opinions of his passengers? Will he prefer the shallow waters of the shore to the deep body of the ocean or mighty river?

No, no! as we love the firm road to walk on rather than the sandy path; as we love the broad, pure daylight rather than the flickering aurora borealis, so we love the Scriptures, as our way of truth and our light to heaven, rather than all the floating, dazzling opinions of men, whether they come from the refinement of intellect, or the rudeness of rough, depraved ignorance.

But, brother, while we cling to our Scriptures, let us not have them as a sealed book on the table or the shelf. Let us open the Book, "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest." Let us, like the noble Bereans, "search the Scriptures daily," whether what we hear and read of men is truth. Let us SEARCH in the spirit of faith, prayer, docility, reverence, love. It is this will make us wise unto salvation, and fortify us against error.

NEITHER POVERTY NOR RICHES.

In speaking upon Agur's prayer, Fuller says, "Lord, wise Agur made his wish, Give me not poverty, lest I steal, and take the name of my God in vain. He saith not, lest I steal and be caught in the manner, and then be stocked, or whipped, or

branded, or forced to fourfold restitution, or put to any other shameful or painful punishment. But he saith, lest I steal and take the name of my God in vain ; that is, lest, professing to serve Thee, I confute a good profession with a bad conversation. Thus Thy children count sin to be the greatest smart in sin, as being more sensible of the wound they therein give to the glory of God, than of all the stripes that man may lay upon them for punishment."

FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISES.

God will not only be faithful to do as He has promised, but to do so at the proper time. I do not say the time that may seem proper to *us* ; but the proper time as appointed by His infinite goodness and wisdom. This time He has recorded before Him in connection with each promise ; as one who makes public engagements for months to come, keeps a book of these engagements clearly and consecutively stated, so that as each date comes it brings an engagement which he is faithful to perform. We may not know the day, or the hour, or the precise way in which the promise will be fulfilled, but this is not our concern. It is for us to take the promise, believe it, meet its conditions, and leave the rest with Him. Let us have confidence in Him, that He *will* do as He has said, even though everything in the *appearance* may contradict. Shall God falsify His Word for anything He has promised us ? Shall He nullify any engagement with us ? Let us be satisfied of this, that God would rather sacrifice His Son, and all things with Him, than fail to be faithful to the weakest of His true saints.

" His every word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies ;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises."

THE HUMAN IN RELIGION.

Let us study to have as little of ourselves in religion as

possible. As he is the best biographer who is continually keeping his subject before the reader, and himself in the shade, so he is the best Christian who manifests most of Christ in his life, and keeps back the mixture of himself in any of his tempers or dispositions.

Some men are continually colouring their religion with their own temperaments; so that when you look at it, it wears more the aspect of their religion than Christ's. The melancholy man, for instance, will cast a sombre appearance over every duty and privilege, promise and precept; so that religion in him is a melancholy religion. The worldly-minded man will represent religion with the spirit of the world actuating it; so that religion in him will be a worldly religion. Thus religion often, like water in a vessel, takes its colour from the character of the person who professes it.

There are two things which we should learn from this: *First, not to take our natural temper and humour for religion.* They are no more religion than the body which is the vehicle of life is life; than the glass which gives colour to the light is light. *Secondly, we should take heed not to condemn other Christians who do not give the same view of religion as we do.* God has not made all men alike any more than all flowers and trees. It is one light, however, which shines upon them, but they do not all throw off to the eye the same hues and shades; shall, therefore, the white rose say to the red rose, "You are not a rose, because not of my colour;" or the ash say to the oak, "You are not wood, because you are not ash." It would be equally absurd in us to condemn others because they have not the same outward aspects in religion that we have, or because their tempers in religion differ from ours. The great questions about which each one should be concerned are, Am I a Christian after Christ, as the model? Does He so live in me as to give tone to my spirit, sentiment to my words, life to my affections, character to my conduct; so that men seeing me, observe more of Christ in my religion, than anything that is human?

GOING TO JESUS.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto Me and rest ;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast !"
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad ;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
" Behold ! I freely give
The living water ; thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live !"
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream ;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
" I am this dark world's Light ;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright."
I look'd to Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun ;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done.—*Horatius Bonar.*

APPENDIX.

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.

I. GENERAL TEMPORAL BLESSINGS.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want: Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over" (Ps. xxiii, 1, 5).

"There is no want to them that fear Him. They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing" (Ps. xxxiv, 9, 10).

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi, 33).

"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv, 19).

"Godliness with contentment is great gain. Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. vi, 6, 17).

II. PARTICULAR TEMPORAL BLESSINGS.

(1) *Food*:—"Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed" (Ps. xxxvii, 3).

"He hath given meat unto them that fear Him; He will be mindful of His covenant" (Ps. cxi, 5).

"I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread" (Ps. cxvii, 15).

"Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty" (Is. lxx, 13).

"Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do

they reap nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them : are ye not much better than they ?" (Matt. vi, 26).

(2) *Raiment* :—" But I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for the body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ? Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matt. vi, 25, 32).

III. SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.

1. *Protection and safety* :—" The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him ; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long" (Deut. xxxiii, 12).

" The name of the Lord is a strong tower ; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. xviii, 10).

" I have set the Lord always before me ; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. xvi, 8).

" He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord" (Ps. cxii, 7).

" He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress ; my God, in Him will I trust. He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust : His truth shall be thy shield and buckler" (Ps. xci, 1, 2, 4, 10).

" Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. cxxi, 1).

" The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid ?" (Ps. xxvii, 1).

"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people, from henceforth even for ever" (Ps. cxxv, 2).

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Is. xliii, 2).

"And who is he that shall harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter iii, 13).

2. *Support in troubles*:—"The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble" (Ps. ix, 9).

"I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy: for Thou hast considered my trouble: Thou hast known my soul in adversities" (Ps. xxxi, 7).

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him" (Nahum i, 7).

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us; so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor. i, 5).

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. iv, 8, 9).

"Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall" (Is. xxv, 4).

3. *Deliverance from troubles*:—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth out of them all" (Ps. xxxiv, 19).

"Thou that hast shown me great and sore troubles shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth" (Ps. lxxi, 20).

"They cry unto the Lord in their trouble: He delivereth them out of their distresses" (Ps. cvii, 19).

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise

Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God" (Ps. xlii, 11).

"I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer. xxix, 11).

"Their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more. I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow" (Jer. xxxi, 12).

4. *Pardon of sin* :—"Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin" (Ex. xxxiv, 7).

"As for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away" (Ps. lxxv, 3).

"I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Is. xliii, 25).

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Is. xlv, 22).

"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x, 17).

"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. xxxi, 34).

"I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. viii, 12).

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Is. i, 18).

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Ps. ciii, 3).

"I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me" (Jer. xxxiii, 8).

5. *Pardon through Jesus Christ* :—"Being justified freely by

His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii, 24).

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Being justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. v, 1, 9).

"By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii, 39).

"Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts xiii, 38).

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i, 7).

"He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world" (1 John ii, 2).

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii, 1).

"He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i, 21).

"He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix, 26).

6. *Restoration to the backslider*:—"Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. iii, 12, 22).

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (Hosea xiv, 4).

7. *Reconciliation to God*:—"All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. v, 18).

"Now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph. ii, 13, 14, &c.)

"You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the

body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight" (Col. i, 21, 22).

8. *Adoption* :—"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii, 14, 15).

"I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi, 18).

"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John i, 12).

"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii, 26).

9. *Access to God with acceptance* :—"Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii, 18).

"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Eph. iii, 12).

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. x, 19, 20, 22).

10. *Union and communion with the Church* :—"Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel" (Heb. xii, 22—24).

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our

fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i, 3).

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. In whom (Christ) ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii, 12, 13, 19, 22).

11. *Hearing Prayer* :—"Thou shalt make thy prayer to Him, and He shall hear thee" (Job xxii, 27).

"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles" (Ps. xxxiv, 6, 15, 17).

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Ps. l, 15).

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer: and thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am" (Isa. lviii, 9).

"And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer: and whilst they are yet speaking I will hear" (Is. lxv, 24).

"Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you" (Jer. xxix, 12).

"They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. xiii, 9).

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more

shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matt. vii, 7, 8, 11).

"If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John xv, 7).

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it" (John xiv, 13).

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed: the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James v, 15, 16).

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John iii, 22).

"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John iv, 14, 15).

"And all things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi, 22).

12. *Sanctification*:—"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John xvii, 17, 18).

"We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to obtain salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. ii, 13).

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight" (Col. i, 12, 21, 22).

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. v, 23).

"This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. xxxi, 33).

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii, 1).

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter i, 4).

13. *Public means of grace*:—"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasure" (Ps. xxxvi, 8).

"To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary" (Ps. lxiii, 2).

"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple" (Ps. lxxv, 4).

"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee. For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps. lxxxiv, 4, 10).

"Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God" (Ps. xcii, 13).

"I sat under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste" (Cant. ii, 3).

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii, 20).

14. *Grace against temptation* :—"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. viii, 37).

"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x, 13).

"My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii, 9).

"In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii, 18).

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" (2 Pet. ii, 9).

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John iv, 4).

15. *Victory over the world* :—"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John xvi, 33).

"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John xvii, 15).

"Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. i, 4).

"For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John v, 4, 5).

16. *Victory over Satan* :—"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii, 31, 32).

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. xvi, 20).

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James iv, 7).

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but

he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John v, 18).

17. *Strength and courage*.—"Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord" (Ps. xxxi, 24).

"The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power to His people" (Ps. lxxviii, 35).

"Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not" (Is. xxxv, 3).

"I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in His name, saith the Lord" (Zech. x, 12).

"The Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel" (Joel iii, 16).

"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. iii, 16).

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph. vi, 10).

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness" (Col. i, 11).

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Is. xl, 31).

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv, 13).

18. *Fruitfulness*.—"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Ps. i, 3).

"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as a lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon" (Hos. xiv, 5).

"Every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. He that abideth in me, and I in him,

the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing." (John xv, 2).

"If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. i, 8).

19. *Progress in grace*:—"The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger" (Job xvii, 9).

"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Ps. lxxxiv, 7).

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon" (Ps. xcii, 12).

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv, 18).

"Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance" (Matt. xiii, 12).

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. iii, 18).

"Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord" (Hos. vi, 3).

20. *Persevering grace*:—"And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" (John x, 28).

"Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are" (John xvii, 11).

"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. xxiv, 13).

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i, 6).

"I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. v, 23).

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet. i, 5).

"Unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

21. *Peace*:—"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John xiv, 27).

(1). *Personal peace*:—"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv, 7).

"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body" (Col. iii, 15).

"Now the God of peace Himself give you peace always by all means" (2 Thess. iii, 16).

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v, 1).

"To be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. viii, 6).

(2). *Mutual peace*:—"Be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Cor. xiii, 11).

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. xii, 18).

"The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable" (James iii, 17).

22. *Comfort*:—"God hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted" (Is. xlix, 13).

"He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. lxi, 1—3).

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to

comfort them that are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. i. 3, 4).

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace" (2 Thess. ii, 16).

23. *Joy in God*:—"Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased" (Ps. iv, 7).

"Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice" (Ps. lxxiii, 3).

"Our hearts shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name" (Ps. xxxiii, 21).

"We will be glad and rejoice in Thee; we will remember Thy love more than wine" (Cant. i, 4).

"Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel" (Is. xli, 16).

"The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing, unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (Is. li, 11).

"I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. iii, 18).

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John xv, 11).

"We rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v, 2).

"Whom, having not seen, ye love: in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. i, 8).

24. *Trust in God*:—"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding" (Prov. iii, 5).

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Is. l, 10).

"Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength" (Is. xxvi, 3).

"Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Tim. iv, 10).

"I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I shall not slide" (Ps. xxvi, 1).

25. *Self-denial*:—"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke ix, 23).

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v, 24).

26. *Self-examination*:—"Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord" (Lam. iii, 40).

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates" (2 Cor. xiii, 5).

"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (1 Cor. xi, 28).

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. cxxxix, 23, 24).

27. *Support in death*:—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. xxiii, 4).

"For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death" (Ps. xlviii, 14).

"My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Ps. lxxiii, 26).

"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears off all faces" (Is. xxv, 8).

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death! I will be thy plague; O grave! I will be thy destruction" (Hos. xiii, 14).

"Death . . . shall not separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii, 38).

"Though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. iv, 16).

"That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii, 14).

"O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv, 55—57).

28. *Prospect beyond death*:—"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (2 Cor. v, 1, 2).

"Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. i, 23).

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. ii, 10).

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. iv, 6—8).

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv, 2, 3).

29. *A glorious resurrection*:—"Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I

shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins shall be consumed within me" (Job xix, 26, 27).

"My flesh shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. xvi, 9, 10).

"If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii, 11).

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. iii. 21).

"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (1 Thess. iv, 14).

"I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John xi, 25).

"This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi, 39).

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. xv, 53, 54).

30. *Happiness in Heaven*:—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii, 9).

"They are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any

heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes " (Rev. vii, 15—17).

" And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ; for the former things are passed away " (Rev. xxi, 4)."

" Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen " (2 Cor. iv, 17, 18).

" Thou wilt show me the path of life : in Thy presence is fulness of joy ; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore " (Ps. xvi, 11).

" The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father " (Matt. xiii, 43).

" Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world " (Matt. xxv, 34).

" The throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. And they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads " (Rev. xxii, 3).

" Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you " (1 Pet. i, 3, 4).

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